

AKUNNINGANIINNIQ:
INUIT VISIONS OF SUCCESS AND
THE ROLE OF INUIT KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This master's thesis explores how former Inuit high school students conceptualize success by exploring the role of the formal education system and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and Inuktitut language in shaping this understanding. Using an Indigenist conversational methodology guided by the writings of Margaret Kovach (2009) and Shawn Wilson (2001, 2008), this thesis explores how 5 former Inuit high school students in Nunavut define notions of success.

Upon completing the data gathering stage through individual interviews and a focus group of five participants, I moved to analyze the data using the Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model set out by the Canada Council of Learning. This model allowed me to explore how participants viewed definitions of success. The labour market outcomes involving graduation from high school have prevailed over Inuit notions of success. Euro-Canadian epistemologies have held a dominant position of power within formal schooling noting success as defined by jobs and material gains while Inuit learning and success are broader in scope. Participants in the study spoke to the critical role being and living as Inuit continues to have in their lives, identities, and their concepts of success. Participants expressed their vision of education engaging with a formal education system that struck a complex *balance* between Inuit knowledge and skills with Eurocentric knowledge and skills. A fundamental part of striking this balance was critically analyzing, understating, and moving to dismantle the dominant position of power held by Eurocentrism in the Nunavut education system.

Based on the participant expressions, I developed the Akunninganiinniq Model of Success as a recommended policy practice in the Northern schools. This model calls for the critical analysis of the dominant position Eurocentrism continues to hold in the shaping of formal education in Nunavut, a fully bilingual education system, and increased presence of Inuit educators within formal settings. In realizing the Akunninganiinniq Model of Education the potential exists to provide Inuit students with an education that allows them to honour their ancestral cultural values, while providing them with every opportunity to exceed within the contexts of modern Inuit communities. By centering the voices and experience of Inuit students, this research provides a developing understanding of the ways that Inuit youth negotiate tensions surrounding their education. Its primary objective, then, is to illuminate the perspectives of those who are most deeply impacted by dominant definitions of success – Inuit themselves.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to a number of my closest relations my late grandmother Verla, my late father in law Livee Kullualik who was instrumental in helping me along a path of personal decolonization. Lastly, with all the love in my heart and soul, I dedicate this to my two beautiful daughters who continually challenge me to help shape our community to allow them to learn Inuttitut, eat country food, and find deep pride in their identities.

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GLOSSARY

Inuk – Singular of Inuit

Inuit – Plural form of Inuk

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit – A term “the Inuit way of doing things, and includes the past, present and future knowledge of Inuit society” (Bell, 2002).

Inuttitut - To do in the style of Inuit, often used as a term for Inuit language, but can also mean ‘to do in the style of Inuit’.

Kamiik – Traditional boots/footwear made of seal or caribou skin.

Nunavut Sivuniksavut – A pre-college program for Inuit students located in Ottawa. NS provides Inuit students with cultural and academic learning opportunities. The program was established in 1985 and is viewed as highly successful with many alumni taking leadership roles within the Territory. The program is partially funded by the Government of Nunavut with the majority of its operating budget being granted by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the organization in Nunavut responsible for the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

Piqqusilirivvik – Inuit cultural learning facility that hosts programs in Qangiqtugaapik (Clyde River), Igloolik, and Qamani’tuaq (Baker Lake). The school is dedicated to facilitating the transmission of Inuit knowledge and culture, rooted in Inuit pedagogy. Piqqusilirivvik is a division of the Nunavut Arctic College.

Qallunaaq – Person of non-Inuk or Euro-Canadian descent. Singular version of *Qallunaat*

Qallunaat – People of non-Inuk or Euro-Canadian descent. Plural version of *Qallunaaq*.

Qallunaatut – To do in the style of non-Inuit/European Decent

Qamutiik – Traditional Inuit sled used to carry supplies, camping gear, and to go hunt. Traditionally towed by dog teams but is now used more behind snow machines.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY: RETHINKING INUIT SUCCESS
Social Location of the Researcher

I am a Qallunaaq (singular form white/Euro-Canadian) who has called Iqaluit, Nunavut, home for the majority of my life. I was born in Vermillion, Alberta, and moved to what was then Frobisher Bay at the age of two. Growing up in Iqaluit in a middle class, white household, I developed an awareness and later an understanding of the cross-cultural issues that often trouble the colonial context in Nunavut and Canada in general. From an early age, I was immersed in Inuit culture and Inuttitut language while witnessing the influx of English and settler cultural influences that increased pressure on Inuit. Throughout primary and secondary school, I often wondered why my Inuk friends left school early while my Qallunaat (Plural form white/Euro-Canadian) friends appeared to find success with relative ease. These questions have led me to seek a deeper understanding of the complex colonial dynamics that characterize educational institutions in Nunavut.

This qualitative study explores how experiences of colonization impact notions of success in Nunavut. In addition, I explore how Inuit students are redefining and living out their conceptions of what it means to be successful in modern Inuit communities with their own children and families. Within this research, I situate myself as a settler Nunavummiuq (person from Nunavut), and as someone who is dedicated to challenging the privileged position of Western knowledge in Nunavut's current education system that has imposed the structures of formal learning and its meaning drawn largely from 'Southern' concepts of success. These concepts were adopted by the settlers in the North, and this is the personal positioning that reinforces my political commitment to work towards an education system that meets the needs of

Inuit students and challenges entrenched systems of colonial power, erasure and domination.

To further understand how I came to this research, it is helpful to elaborate on my upbringing as a student within Nunavut's education system, and how this experience influenced my own emerging understanding of success. Throughout high school I became increasingly aware of how the education system privileges Western, or Qallunaat, epistemologies. Education was deeply rooted in colonial methods in that high school was taught in English with heavy emphasis on literacy and numeracy; learning was to take place within confines of schools, according to Southern schedules. Very little space existed for learning the culture of the people whose land I occupied. Moreover, while I excelled in school, many of my peers, and many of my closest friends, slowly began to disengage with school before exiting the system entirely. Early on in my high school years, I enjoyed my school days in the presence of a diverse group of students, including many Inuit. From these interactions and relationships, I developed a greater understanding of Inuit life and learned more of the life of living on the land. Throughout my upbringing, and more specifically my involvement in sports, music, and other extra curricular activities, I was accepted by the community. This acceptance allowed me to move comfortably in the Inuit cultural milieu and a Qallunaat/white privileged society. I used what I could throughout my years outside of school. As I progressed through school, however, I found myself in classes with only Qallunaat (non-Inuit) students. Over time, and particularly when I left school to attend university, I began to reflect on this experience as a site of racial and cultural discrimination, and thus as a site of injustice.

In 2004 I left Iqaluit to pursue a degree in Indigenous studies at Trent University. I continued to reflect on my experience in the Nunavut high school system while engaging in explorations of a number of related socio-political issues. My experience at Trent was significant

in sharpening my analysis of how colonization continues to shape communities across Canada, as well as the role the education system can play in both disrupting and recreating experiences of colonization. After completing the program, I moved back to Iqaluit and worked as a substitute teacher, coordinated a series of Inuttitut immersion camps outside of formal school, and began to explore art as a medium of facilitating community discussion about decolonization in Nunavut. My experience returning to Iqaluit allowed me to measure the analytical tools I gained at University against community experiences with education in the Territory. It is also important to note that music has played an important part in expressing my reflections on issues of language, culture, and decolonization in my Nunavut. More recently, our band The Jerry Cans, have been gaining increased attention for our dedication to singing in Inuttitut, focus on empowering youth to be proud of their language and identity, as well as discussing decolonization on a national level. Throughout all of these experiences I continued to reflect on my educational experience. Enrolling in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan provided me substantial space to engage in an in-depth analysis of how my educational experience related to definitions of success.

A contributing factor for the experience of many of my Inuit friends would appear to relate to the ways that understandings of success are uniquely situated within culture and the family. Indeed, students from Qallunaat and Inuit cultural backgrounds conceptualize success in markedly different ways. For example, success within my family centered on learning skills to gain wage employment. These ideas were reproduced in school, where success was measured by very specific criteria, including English proficiency, literacy and numeracy, deference to authority and organization. In other words, these processes and expectations actively reinforced my own understanding, and presumably that of my fellow Euro-Canadian families, of what it

means to be successful, all while explicitly privileging Western knowledge, language, culture, and ways of being and knowing. As this reflected my own cultural/family values and experience, I excelled where some of my friends did not.

Most of my Inuk friends came to school with divergent experiences and perspectives. Within their families, success was defined in relation to language, culture and skills. To be successful meant being able to speak Inuttitut, holding Inuit cultural values, having proficiency and skills with traditional activities, such as hunting, raising children, preserving a relationship to the land, and, finally, being able to navigate the changes resulting from colonial experiences within communities. These attributes, in turn, provided the basis for my understanding of Inuit success. In spite of these important influences, however, culturally situated knowledge that reflected Inuit perspectives was entirely absent from the formal education system, thus reaffirming the dominant position of Qallunaat students.

By failing to value Inuit knowledge, culture and beliefs, Inuit students were denied any opportunity to achieve success that reflected their own experience. As a result, many of my Inuk friends faced increasing pressure to adapt their worldview to Western norms, and, over time, more and more exited high school. Although there were a number of reasons for their departures, it was clear that the education system was not meeting their needs. However, the blame for Inuit student disengagement has often been placed on the students themselves, their parents and families, with the school system taking little responsibility.

Despite the many reports and studies conducted on the Northern experience, this qualitative research study is one step on a larger journey to deepen not only my understanding of how experiences of colonialism have impacted education processes in Nunavut but also to contribute to the developing discourse of Indigenous education. It also investigates how Inuit

cultural knowledge is, or is not, currently influencing the dominant educational model in Arctic regions, a process I understand as decolonization. Canadian anticolonial scholar George Dei (2000) writes that decolonization involves “breaking with the ways in which the indigenous human condition is defined and shaped by dominant Euro-American cultures, and asserting an understanding of the indigenous social reality informed by local experiences and practices” (p. 4). By contributing to existing knowledge on how Inuit success is being realized in modern contexts, this research seeks to strengthen and affirm Inuit epistemologies, while also addressing the ongoing impact of colonialism on the lives of Inuit students in Nunavut. Put simply, I aim to identify some of the underlying systemic factors that explain why my Inuit friends encountered challenges within formal education systems in Nunavut while non-Inuit students were able to find success. It is my hope that this research casts a light on this injustice and will provide the necessary impetus to address deep-seated inequities within Nunavut’s educational system.

Problem Statement

Definitions of what it means to be successful differ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and cultures (Battiste, 2005; Canadian Council of Learning, 2006; Erasmus & Dussault, 1996). In Nunavut, two knowledge systems currently frame what success means in the lives of Inuit youth (Berger, 2006; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011). The first is informed by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (cow-yee-mah-yah-two-qah-ngi-t) or traditional Inuit knowledge (hereafter referred to as IQ), which reflects the unique history and contemporary reality of people and place. The other is a colonial invention; an imposed mode of conventional schooling that reflects Qallunaat or Euro-Canadian knowledge systems. While both systems are understood and used in the North, IQ is not embraced or valued equally within formal schooling practices in Nunavut (Aylward, 2007; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011).

Education in Nunavut continues to be deeply rooted in Eurocentrism (Arnaquq, 2008; Aylward, 2007; Tootoo, 2008). Drawing from the work of Blaut (1993), Chickasaw author J. Youngblood Henderson defines Eurocentrism as, “a dominant intellectual and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans” (Henderson, 2000, p. 58). Eurocentrism is thus a pillar of the colonial project wherein Indigenous epistemologies are constructed as inferior, ‘backwards’, and having less value than those espoused by European/Qallunaat. As such, Eurocentrism justifies further colonial domination. Formal education in Nunavut continues to subscribe to a Eurocentric model. Indeed, the pedagogy, curriculum, language of instruction, and the overall ways of being that inform Nunavut’s education systems are derived from imposed Western epistemology within a historical colonial order. In order to understand systemic challenges faced by Inuit students, then, it is necessary to first understand how Eurocentric notions of success influence the existing education system in Nunavut.

The education system in Nunavut prioritizes ideals of success that are not Indigenous to the land or culture of Inuit (Aylward, 2007; Tootoo, 2008). A great deal of emphasis is placed on learning skills that will allow individuals to secure employment in a wage economy, as opposed to developing the kinds of cultural faculties that support the preservation and promotion of IQ. The dominance of Western knowledge and methods of transferring this knowledge through formal education can be traced back to Eurocentric definitions of success that devalue and negate Inuit educational processes. Rather than being a space where Inuit and Western notions of success can co-exist, the Eurocentric paradigm has prevailed, often eclipsing the value of Indigenous epistemologies. This domination is mirrored in the employment sector with a curious dichotomy of high unemployment and high job vacancies. The establishment of the Government

of Nunavut provided a vast increase in employment opportunities but many of these jobs continue to be filled by non-Indigenous workers from southern Canada (Berger 2006).

Despite its inferior position within formal education, Inuit notions of success are not only measurable, but continue to play a significant role in the lives of Inuit (Berger 2007; Canadian Council of Learning 2007, 2009). Among Indigenous populations, Inuit youth report the highest rates of involvement in cultural activities and traditional skills such as hunting and fishing, Inuit language proficiency, time spent with Elders, and time spent on the land (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007, 2009). Moreover, involvement in Inuit cultural practices continues to be an important force shaping the lives of Inuit children and youth, and there is increasing evidence that proficiency in Aboriginal languages and culture contributes to success in formal schooling (Berger, 2007). In this way, it is clear that cultural learning holds an important position in achieving success for Inuit people, despite the prevailing overvaluation of Eurocentric education systems (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007, 2009).

Balancing competing notions of success is the principal challenge of young Inuit (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011). Inuit students are required to negotiate success as defined by their cultural roots while experiencing increasing pressure to achieve success on terms set by Euro-Canadian and Nunavut Territorial policies. While the conventional Nunavut education system is seen as being foreign to Inuit youth, most students continue to measure themselves against this knowledge system (Arnaquq 2008; Aylward, 2007; Berger, 2007; Pitseolak, 2008). To achieve success as defined by the Euro-Canadian model, many Inuit students are pressured to abandon or compromise cultural practices.

Among Aboriginal identity groups, Inuit have the lowest rate of university degrees (3%) compared to the average Aboriginal rate (8%) and non-Aboriginal rate of (21%) (Kapsalis, 2006;

Statistics Canada, 2012). The consequences of this systemic failure exact a heavy toll on Inuit students and their communities. Inuit students regularly struggle to achieve functional bilingualism (Brady, 2000), and many do not feel a sense of belonging in school (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2010). At 50 percent, Nunavut reports one of the lowest high school completion rates in Canada. Thus, not only is the low completion rate among Inuit disproportionate to the rest of Canada, but it has a dramatic impact on other aspects of life in Nunavut, including employment, increased rates of crime and suicide, and decreased access to high school and post-secondary education. It can, therefore, be concluded that the current education system in Nunavut is failing Inuit students as evidenced by the increasing number of Inuit students encountering difficulties achieving success by either Inuit or Euro-Canadian standards (Berger, 2006).

In attempting to respond to the pressures imposed by competing epistemologies, many Inuit students have moved to combine both worldviews, resulting in new definitions of what it means to be successful in Nunavut today (Berger, P. 2008; Tootoo, 2008). Despite this novel strategy, very little is known about this emergent trend. Accordingly, this study explores how former Inuit students are defining their own success. It identifies the role of IQ in shaping self-perceptions of their future and develops a deeper understanding of the ongoing influence of IQ in the lives of Inuit students. Finally, this study will consider how Inuit high school graduates perceive Eurocentric notions of success, and the potential barriers or challenges this has created for them in achieving their aspirations as rooted in IQ. By pursuing this research, it will be possible to evaluate how current schooling processes in Nunavut either support or deny the ability of Inuit students to achieve success. Accordingly, an important goal of this research is to contribute an applicable knowledge base with which to guide the future development of Nunavut schools so that the system may effectively meet the needs of Inuit students, their families, and

communities.

Situating The Researcher

It is important to note my position as a non-Indigenous Euro-Canadian who has lived in Nunavut for the majority of my life. While my experience living in the North, learning Inuttitut, and now raising my own Inuit children within an Inuit cultural context provides a certain level of depth to the study, I was raised in a Qallunaat/white household, and this significantly influenced how I relate to these issues. It is critically important that I am aware of how my understanding is influenced by both my Qallunaat upbringing and my more recent experience living in Iqaluit. This was especially crucial during the data collection and analysis phases of this project where I had to maintain careful awareness of how this privilege influenced my interpretation of the research participants.

Despite my lifelong relationship to Nunavut, I have become increasingly aware of my complicity as a settler and how this position affects my engagement with Nunavut-centered research. To proceed in a way that is both accountable and respectful, it is vital that I acknowledge the privilege and responsibilities that I possess as a settler in Inuit territory. My privilege as a white-settler was evidenced in school by a system that reflected my family's cultural values, along with the strong family support I received to finish and succeed, and again through the financial and emotional support that enabled me to pursue post-secondary education. It is principally as a result of these multiple layers of privilege that I have been able to contemplate my role as a non-Inuk ally.

Finally, my Inuk partner and I have two beautiful daughters, Viivi, and Laivi, who were born in Iqaluit and are raised in the community language of Inuttitut. I am dedicated to working towards ensuring that my children have every opportunity to feel empowered by an education

and upbringing that respects and honours their ancestral language and culture. My upbringing and current experience therefore influences my positionality in relation to this project, and these contrasting experiences represent the foundation from which I engage personally and intellectually with the complex impacts of colonization and processes of decolonization in Nunavut. Finally, in acknowledging that the following analysis is informed by experience, I make no claim to objectivity. Indeed, this study is not neutral.

Uqaujauriaqarmat

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to acknowledge the community-based nature of this research. Maintaining the vitality of Inuttitut culture and language is close to the heart of many Nunavummiut, or people from Nunavut. In conducting this research as a person from Nunavut, I seek to contribute to emerging discussion concerning the importance of Inuttitut language and cultural learning and its relationship to Inuit learning success. I do this with the hope of helping to ensure that knowledge of Inuttitut language and culture continue to be sources of pride for Inuit in Nunavut for generations to come.

In the following chapters I will first outline the relevant literature and background material pertinent to an exploration of Inuit success. I start chapter two by outlining the educational history of Nunavut then move to outline the discourses of Indigenous success, highlighting its distinct nature from Eurocentric definitions. In Chapter 3, I draw on the work of Indigenous scholars Margaret Kovach (2005, 2009) and Shawn Wilson (2001, 2013) to outline the Indigenist/Inuttitut conversational methodology I employed to carry out this study. I also highlight a number of Inuit research *maligait*, or Inuit research protocols, that contributed to situating this research as Indigenist/Inuttitut. In Chapter 4, I introduce the study findings by introducing participant perspectives of success. I organize this chapter by first outlining ‘stories

of success’ whereby I provide introductions to each participant along with relevant background information. I then move to introduce the ‘Akunninganiinniq Model of Success’, which drew on the Canada Council of Learning Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. The Akunninganiinniq Model was developed in response to participants expressed desires for ‘balanced’ definitions of success, whereby Inuit definition of success challenge the dominant position of Eurocentric success. In Chapter 5, I elaborate on the Akunninganiinniq model while providing a number of critical supports and suggestions, along with recommended further research required to further develop and implement it.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL DISCOURSE OF INUIT SUCCESS

Success is a culturally rooted concept (Council of Ministers Education, & Statistics Canada, 2010; Erasmus & Dussault, 1996; Pidgeon, 2008; Tootoo, 2008). Despite cultural differences, education is often seen as both a barrier and a key to achieving success (Berger, 2009; McGregor, 2010; Moon, 2014; Simon, 2011; Tootoo, 2008; Tulloch, 2009). In Nunavut, success continues to represent a complex question for Inuit youth, due in part to the diverse cultural frameworks that underwrite the definitions of success in the North (Berger, 2009; McGregor, 2010; Simon, 2011, Tootoo, 2008). While there is a growing body of scholarship that analyzes barriers to Aboriginal success and achievement in school, relatively little research has examined how Indigenous students are working to define and achieve success on their own terms. The following section will analyze relevant literature and background on how definitions of success are shifting.

This literature review provides insight surrounding the following components and questions: 1) relevant historical background to situate the current discussion about conventional education in the Nunavut context; 2) how success is currently being discussed in the Territory from the point of view of educators, policy makers and educational theorists; 3) the important contributions of Inuit voices in re-aligning educational values in Nunavut; and 4) highlight what is missing from this discourse. Accordingly, this literature review begins with an introduction to the Northern educational experience and context.

History of Conventional Education in Nunavut Context

Few Indigenous peoples around the world have experienced such drastic societal change in a relatively short time than the Inuit in northern Canada (Berger, 2009; Putulik, 2008; Simon, 2011). Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Inuit exercised complete control over the education and

socialization processes in their communities. Inuit language, values and beliefs, along with the mechanisms to reproduce this knowledge within subsequent generations, were clearly defined (Bennett & Rowley, 2004; McGregor, 2010; Vick-Westgate, 2002). Education involved passing on societal norms and laws from generation to generation (Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Pitseolak, 2008). To be successful meant the ability to engage with and adopt these cultural norms as a way of life. The knowledge associated with these processes was firmly established and stored in the oral history of Inuit communities, which represented the primary vehicle for its transmission to subsequent generations. More generally, Inuit developed communities around their lived reality and experience; they celebrated births, deaths and accomplishments in ways that contributed to strong, resilient communities (Bennett & Rowley, 2004).

Increased contact with colonial institutions, including government and church organizations, resulted in the imposition of Qallunaat, or white, educational processes. With the imposition of a foreign school structure and its associated rules, norms and dogmas, learning within Inuit communities — which had previously relied on nature, animals, and on sila (the spiritual life force of the land) — faced pressure to conform to Eurocentric terms. Colonial incursions in the form of forced relocation of family camps into government created settlements, and the establishment of residential schools in the Arctic therefore had significant and far-ranging impacts on the lives of Inuit, acting as catalysts for shifts in Inuit understandings of success (McGregor, 2010). These impositions brought devastating colonial trauma, which continues to shape community dynamics in Nunavut.

A significant practical manifestation of Eurocentric education was the establishment of the residential school system (Milloy, 1999; Pitseolak, 2008). The residential school system had the explicit goal of “taking the Indian out of the child” (John A. MacDonald in Ireland, 2009),

whereby success was rooted in assimilation and removing the child from their family and culture. Across Canada, governments and churches imposed Eurocentric educational processes that stripped young Indigenous students of their traditional value systems and beliefs, replacing them with European ways of being. A number of authors have researched the imposition of residential schools and colonial education processes in Inuit communities (Kuniliusie, 2008; Putulik, 2008; Vick Westgate, 2002). Similar to residential schools in southern Canada, governments used residential schools to assert control over educational processes in Nunavut. According to Qallunaaq scholar Heather McGregor (2010),

By the late 1950's small schools had been erected across much of the Eastern Arctic, and Inuit children were exposed to the paternalistic, assimilative approach of Qallunaat (non-Inuit) educators. Inuit parents had no say as to how or what their children learned in school. (p. 54)

In other words, to be successful in conventional schools was wholly defined on Qallunaat terms, with little to no influence by Inuit parents/communities. In this way, the residential school system was a powerful tool of colonial control that was used to underwrite a shift in Inuit perspectives of success.

The impact of colonialism in Nunavut has led to increasing challenges for the education system in the Territory (Berger, 2006; ITK, 2011; Kuniliusie, 2008; Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, 2007; Putulik, 2008). Originally modeled after education systems in the South, Nunavut is making efforts to integrate the Northern experience and spirit into the school system (McGregor, 2012). Despite provisional gains, however, Qallunaat epistemology continue to hold a position of power within an education system focused on producing high-performing, English-speaking students who are effectively 'job ready' once they finish school. Predictably, this ideal

does not fit the reality of approximately half of all Inuit students (Berger, 2006). This is a principal challenge for Nunavut in that the creation of the Territorial government established constitutionally protected Inuit hiring policies that are not currently being met. The government has stated its goal to make Inuttitut the official language of government, along with an 85% Inuit workforce, by 2020 (ibid.). Despite these laudable objectives, however, lack of education continues to be a serious barrier to employment within the territorial government. Thomas Berger highlights the depth of this challenge in his 2006 article, *The Nunavut Project* (2006):

There are...3200 jobs in the Government of Nunavut. The Inuit today occupy 45 percent of those positions...however you calculate the matter today, there is an Inuit shortfall...Overall, the numbers tell us that there are in the vicinity of 1500 jobs that could be claimed by Inuit had they the necessary skills. (p. 18)

Berger goes on to criticize the education system as a major factor inhibiting the ability of Inuit to fully participate in territorial governance, noting that the system fails to meet the needs of Inuit students (pp. 27 – 35).

Over time, the influence of imported, dominant Southern curriculum, combined with a lack of culturally relevant education, has had serious impacts at the community level. Available data indicates a loss of cultural knowledge, with many communities reporting decreased Inuttitut language fluency, declining participation in cultural activities, such as hunting or spending time with Elders, and a growing sentiment that Inuit cultural identity is being lost (Berger 2007; Dorais 1995; Dorais & Sammons, 2002; Tulloch, 2009). It is important to note that these challenges have developed concurrently with the increasing role of Western style schooling in the socialization processes of Inuit (Martin, 2000; McGregor, 2010).

Taken together, the educational challenges in Nunavut have a significant impact on other

aspects of community wellbeing. Nunavut reports high unemployment rates, increased levels of crime and suicide, and low access to higher education. Significantly, multiple commentators agree that an effective, culturally appropriate education system could represent a partial solution to these problems (Berger, 2006, ITK, 2011; Martin, 2000). While a strong desire exists within communities to promote and preserve Inuit culture and language (Berger, 2007), educators, governments and communities alike continue to struggle to make this dream a reality.

The Government of Nunavut has identified Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a pillar of future development for the education system (Government of Nunavut 2005; Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010). In the 2005 *Nunavut Education Act* the Government clearly established the importance of Inuit epistemologies as the basis for education in the Territory. Ed Picco, the Minister of Education at the time, stated to the Legislative Assembly that "Nunavummiut want a made-in Nunavut Education Act that reflects Inuit values and culture. We want to ensure the best quality of education for our children" (p. 2). From this statement, it is clear that even the highest levels of government in the Territory envision an education system that values IQ, one that enables students to 'succeed'. Given the emphasis placed on success, then, it is critically important to understand what success means in this context.

Aboriginal Achievement and Decolonizing Success

“Aboriginal communities often define success as mastering a curriculum and retaining culture heritage. A European culture measures success in school by measuring academic achievement”

(Melnechenko & Horsman, 1998, pp.7-8)

The tension implied by the divergent understandings of success described in the quote above is, to a considerable extent, an experience shared by Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Although it is important to acknowledge the specificities of colonial experience across Indigenous communities (McGregor, 2012), a growing body of work discusses definitions of success across cultures, along with the tensions that exist between them.

At present Indigenous success and achievement in formal schooling is often framed in relation to perceived deficits among Indigenous learners and communities (Battiste, 2005; CCL, 2007). Conventionally, research has mainly focused on negative factors that have contributed to achievement gaps between Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous peers. One prevalent example of this is the widespread use of high school and postsecondary graduation rates as a dominant measure of success (Canada Council of Learning, 2007). A number of authors argue that these metrics are too narrow, inflexible and Eurocentric in that they deny the importance of culturally rooted educational values such as lifelong learning (Battiste, 2005; Canada Council of Learning, 2007). This point notwithstanding, it may also be argued that understandings of success in Nunavut, along with the methods used to measure success, have shifted away from Inuit values as a result of the imposition of rigid Eurocentric criterion. Indeed, high school graduation is now viewed as the primary indicator to determine whether or not a student is ‘educated’. Yet, as others have shown, such measures tend to individualize the problem of low educational attainment, taking accountability off of the education system, while ignoring the impact of larger, societal forces such as socioeconomic status (Battiste, 2005; 2013; Brady, 1996; Melnechenko & Horsemen, 1998).

As a result of the problems associated with research that places implicit blame for low academic achievement with individual students, some authors have sought to explain Aboriginal achievement gaps by identifying systemic failures embedded within Eurocentric education systems (Battiste, 2014). One leading theory for explaining Inuit students’ experiences in school

is cultural discontinuity (RCAP, 1996, Ogbu, 1982). According to Yanu (2007), cultural discontinuity is based on the belief that prior cultural socialization influences how students learn in the school system. More specifically, Yanu writes culture influences how students negotiate, mediate, and respond to curriculum, instructional strategies, learning tasks, and communication patterns in the classroom. Within this framework, educational challenges faced by Inuit students can be seen as resulting from a disconnect between their home/community cultures, which are rooted in Inuit epistemologies, and the dominant model within schools, which is based on Qallunaat ways of being (Kuniliusie, 2008; Aylward, 2007; Tootoo, 2008).

In recent years, a number of authors have moved to assert Indigenous models for measuring success. Two landmark documents by the Canadian Council for Learning (CCL, 2007, 2009) critique Eurocentric measures of success and recommend new criterion through which Aboriginal success can and should be measured. In *Redefining How Success is measured in First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Communities*, CCL Executive Director, Paul Capon, identified a number of key educational values that are informed by Aboriginal epistemologies. Through consultation with Inuit, First Nations and Metis community and education leaders, the report attempts to redefine how success is understood and measured in Aboriginal communities. It argues for new models of education, including a commitment to ‘holistic lifelong learning models’ that measure success in multiple domains both within and outside of school in formal and informal domains. Published in 2009, the second document is an extension of the first, and draws additional attention to the need for Indigenous-centered education systems that mark a departure from Eurocentric conventions.

In an Inuit context, lifelong learning is intrinsically tied to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (Arnakak 2000; Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Qanatsiaq Anoe, 2008). Although there are numerous

definitions for IQ, most commentators agree that it can be expressed as “the Inuit way of doing things” (Bell, 2002, p. 1). Within this worldview, education is not seen as separate from the day-to-day transmission of cultural practices. Elder Pudlo Pudlat (2004) touches on a number of defining characteristics of traditional Inuit education:

The way I learned about being a hunter was by going along with the men for the day. No one said to me, ‘This is the way you do this and this is the way you do that.’ In those days we just learned by example, by watching and trying. For us, when we were learning about life, about life skills it was from experience, from watching and by example. The teacher was there, but he was not there to tell us, “Hey that's a mistake.” (p. 32)

Pudlat’s testimony makes clear that IQ is centered on passing down well-established Inuit pedagogical and epistemological processes. Within the Inuit educational values set out by the CCL, IQ is identified as central to defining success within an Inuit context. McGregor (2014) likewise contends that integrating cultural knowledge must be a priority for educational development in the territory.

Despite the Nunavut government’s recognition of the importance of an education system based on IQ (Arnakak, 2000; Aylward, 2007; Government of Nunavut, 2014), a number of critiques have emerged that point to the ongoing challenges of implementing IQ within Nunavut schooling processes. In, *Discourses of Cultural Relevance in Nunavut Schooling*, Lynn Aylward (2007) argues that attempts at basing pedagogy and curriculum on Inuit culture often fall prey to tokenism, leaving assimilative Western education systems intact. This, alongside other critiques, suggests that ongoing collaborative community involvement with government-led efforts are required to ensure that the integration of IQ is substantive, meaningful and genuine.

An important aspect contributing to the ongoing challenges in providing an education rooted in IQ in Nunavut is the lack of Inuit educators working within formal education settings. The goal of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program is to increase the number of Inuit educators across the Territory. Despite the program, Nunavut schools continue to see a shortfall of Inuit educators in classrooms (O'Donoghue et al. 2005: 10, Tompkins, 2009). Through interviews with prospective Inuit students, Paul Berger (2010) identified a number of factors that inhibited Inuit prospective students from pursuing a career as a teacher. Berger identified students being required to relocate to larger Territorial centers (Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, or Cambridge Bay), ineffective recruiting approaches, and the limited scope of certification (many prospective students were interested in teaching at the high school level whereas NTEP training certifies teachers to teach from Kindergarten to grade 6) as major contributing factors (p, 4-6).

In addition to the challenges of NTEP, the establishment of the Territory of Nunavut has also been identified as a significant set back in continuing to implement IQ in Nunavut schools. In her article, '*Protecting embers to light the qullit of Inuit learning in Nunavut communities*', Qallunaaq scholar Joanne Tompkins (2009), citing the work of Donoghue et al. (2005) writes, "Nunavut government departments recruited many qualified Inuit teachers, 'often stripping schools of senior Inuit leaders and role models'" (p. 4). This resulted in significant set backs for pursuing an education rooted in IQ, as one long time Inuk educator observed, "Nothing was there anymore. Everybody was gone. It was start from scratch. Ideas and beliefs were gone. You needed your job so you remained silent" (Tompkins, 2009). In this way, the lack of Inuit educators continues to pose a problem for the implementation of IQ within Nunavut schools.

Inuit Perspectives of Success: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

In the late 1970s, in response to Eurocentric schooling, and in reaction to the national

bilingual and bicultural commission's efforts to assert a British and French co-founding of Canada (see Cardinal, 1999 *The Unjust Society*), Indigenous people in Canada began to assert their voice and call for more control over education in their communities. These efforts came to fruition as policy in the form of the Indian Control of Indian Education, which was introduced to the federal government in 1972 and implemented the following year in 1973 (Vick-Westgate, 2002; Battiste, 2014). Describing this period, author Ann Vick-Westgate (2002) writes of the push to pursue increased 'Inuitization' of school processes in Nunavik by establishing the first Inuit controlled school boards. This also involved efforts to develop culturally-appropriate curriculum, Inuit teacher training, and the introduction of other methods to ensure Inuit epistemologies were valued within formal schooling (p. 76). Although Vick-Westgate's book focuses on Inuit in Nunavik, located in Northern Quebec, she raises important points about the relationship between self-government, the pursuit of an education based on Inuit culture and language, and challenging Eurocentrism within schools. These general values had an influence in Nunavut as well (McGregor, 2010). Although not explicitly stated, it can be argued that the push for 'Inuitization' within schools was part of a larger political movement to establish Inuit notions of success within formal education systems. While the gains of increased 'Inuitization' are of value, aspects of the system identified as needing change were limited to schooling processes with relatively little focus on the Eurocentric roots of the system itself.

In Nunavut, the pinnacle of the 'Inuitization' movement culminated in the signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in 1993 and the eventual creation of the Nunavut Territorial Government in 1999 (Aylward 2004; McGregor, 2010). With the ratification of this agreement, the new government gained control over multiple jurisdictional responsibilities, including education (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, 2007). Inuit effectively achieved what they had

long desired: control over formal schooling in Nunavut. The next step in the process was to implement a shift towards culture-based education in the Territory. Culture-based education is an important concept within Aboriginal education and has been extensively identified as a critical component for the future of education in Nunavut (Berger, 2009; Cajete, 1994; Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010).

20 years after the formal establishment of Nunavut the education system continues to struggle to implement culturally based education. School functions predominantly in English, based on southern scheduling, and an imported curriculum (Berger, 2006; Martin, 2000). Despite calls for specific action to be taken to achieve a fully bilingual system (Berger, 2006; Martin, 2000), Nunavut schools continue to struggle to produce bilingual students. Critics identify the 'early-exit' bilingual system in elementary school as a significant challenge to achieving bilingualism. The early-exit approach delivers instruction in Inuktitut from kindergarten to grades 3, 4, or 5 (depending on the community) in Inuktitut then abruptly transitioning students to English for the remainder of their education. This system is based on the assumption that students who possess a solid base in their first language will have the ability to transition this success to a second language (Martin, 2000). Critics view this approach as problematic as the early-exit system does not produce bilingual students but rather students who are unable to function at high literacy levels in either language (Berger, 2006; Martin, 2000).

These tensions were recently illustrated with the proposal of Bill C37 in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Bill 37 was an amendment to the education act, which would delay the proposed goal of a fully functioning bilingual education system by 2020 (Rogers, 2017). This bill was met with strong resistance from Inuit organizations and communities across Nunavut who viewed it as a way of avoiding the difficult work of genuinely pursuing an education based on IQ

(Rogers, 2017). Responding to the resistance, Bill C37 was eventually dropped but acts as a clear example of the tensions between the Department of Education's perspective and the desires of communities across Nunavut.

As mentioned above, the implementation of cultural education continues to be a challenge for the Government of Nunavut (Aylward 2007). In the face of these challenges, it is important to note examples of education programs that are viewed as successfully implementing an education rooted in IQ. Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) is a pre-college program based in Ottawa. NS provides Inuit students with cultural and academic learning opportunities to pursue increased employment opportunities being created by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. The program was established in 1985 and is viewed as, "an extraordinary experiment in bridging the divide between North and South" (Pastre, p. 11). NS is seen as highly successful with many alumni taking leadership roles within the Territory. It is important to note that the program functions outside the Nunavut Education Act but is partially funded by the Government of Nunavut. The majority of its operating budget is granted by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the organization in Nunavut responsible for the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. As will be illustrated in this thesis, NS has played an important role in the lives of all the participants who took part in this study.

Another example of educational processes rooted in IQ is Piqusilirivvik, the Inuit cultural learning facility in Clyde River. The enrollment requirements, approach to teaching and learning, and curriculum are deeply rooted in IQ principles. Enrollment is inclusive: prospective students do not require a high school diploma, do not need to pay tuition, must be 18 years of age, and be able to receive instruction in Inuktitut. Curriculum is flexible based on the concept of 'route based learning'. Author Hugh Lloyd (2011) writes,

Routes can be short of long; an afternoon of berry picking or rabbit hunting, or longer trips to hunt caribou or visit family in other communities. Routes are used at all times of the year, in different weather and traveling conditions and the trips along the routes provide an endless set of experience. No trip is ever the same. (p, 170)

Elders are involved in identifying appropriate routes as well as the activities to be carried out on each route. All levels of implementation take place in Inuttitut language. The route based system resisted the compartmentalized approach of Qallunaatut teaching and learning, and instead approaches learning on experience, land, and relationships. The goal of the school is not to supplant the formal education system but provide an alternative for Inuit who wish to engage with a cultural education. One research participant attended Piqqusilirivvik learning facility and spoke to the significant impact it had on his perspective.

Inuit Students' Contemporary Perspectives of Success

The proposed research attempts to center Inuit perspectives in order to unpack competing definitions of success in Nunavut. Existing research on Aboriginal education, though external to the Nunavut context, has focused on perspectives of success among Indigenous students (Bazylak, 2002, Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010). This work in turn provides a useful starting point to understand how education policy operates in schools. Métis educator Darryl Bazylak (2002) shared his research findings about how female Aboriginal secondary school students perceived factors that led them to success in school. As he writes,

...The researcher provided Aboriginal high school students with an opportunity to share their voice and perspectives, and in this voice, identify factors which contribute to their success...It is anticipated that their voices and experiences ... can offer educators insights which can begin to transform the educational system. (Bazylak,

2002, p. 4)

By centering student voices, Bazylak's (2002) research establishes some insightful conclusions regarding student experiences in school systems and how success for them emerged not just within the school, but outside as well.

Within a Nunavut context, many researchers are also shifting their focus towards how students perceive their own educational experience. In their recent article, Lewthwaite and MacMillan (2010) provide insight into how Inuit students perceive their educational experiences as successful. The authors draw attention to pedagogical techniques and factors related to the larger classroom environment that facilitate student success. As they argue,

Although several studies have focused on the identification of the critical elements of instruction influencing the school success of Aboriginal students, few have focused on grounding the studies in the voice of Aboriginal students themselves. (p. 3)

They found that students identified the influence of compassionate teachers who supported them in finding success in school. In this way, the authors acknowledge the agency Inuit students possess in critically understanding their own situations, as well as their ability to contribute solutions that will encourage their success. Moreover, although data on Inuit participation in formal schooling exists, little is known about how youth view this participation as useful in achieving their life goals. Accordingly, an important objective of this research is to enhance understanding of how Inuit youth view their cultural teachings as relevant to their contemporary realities. It then became necessary to identify an appropriate methodology to further explore Inuit success. In the next chapter I outline the methodological approach used with this study.

CHAPTER THREE: AN INDIGENIST/INUITITUT CONVERSATIONAL METHODOLOGY

“Research is not just something that is out there:

It’s something that you’re building for yourself and for the community”

(Sean Wilson, 2001)

Identifying an appropriate methodology and approach to conduct this research was a complex task. My intention was to find the right qualitative methodology and employ an approach that fulfilled all necessary research obligations and ethics protocols according to both Qallunaat (settler) and Inuit research specificities. This was perhaps the most challenging aspect of this project and involved a long period of reflection and background research to understand the various components and subject positions at play in this thesis. There are a number of potential qualitative methods suited to this research with each possessing a number of positive attributes and benefits. As I am not an Indigenous researcher, but identify rather as an Indigenist researcher, I determined a conversational method situated within an Indigenist/Inuttitut research paradigm was the most appropriate methodology to carry out this project. To begin this chapter, I will outline a number of considerations that relate to the definitions and methodology I employed, starting with a discussion of the epistemological paradigm that grounds this research.

A growing body of literature challenges the practice of carrying out research within an Indigenous context from a Western perspective (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Wilson, 2000; Smith, 1999). These critiques involve highlighting the ontological limitations of using one cultural set of values and beliefs to study another. Indigenous ontologies, or ways of knowing, fundamentally differ from Western ways of knowing. Additionally, the methodologies and most appropriate ways to explore differing ontologies also vary. Positivistic research methodologies – and the notion that research is rooted in objective truths - no longer dominate modern research

trends. Western research methodologies are themselves rooted in specific ontologies and are in many cases seen as insufficient in exploring those that differ on fundamental levels. This shift is being accelerated by the emergence of Indigenous methodologies within academic discourse. At this point it is important to note the impact of researching Indigenous communities is not only ineffective, it can also be dangerous. Linda Smith (1999) writes about the historical impact of using Eurocentric methodologies to study within Indigenous contexts. She continues in identifying the negative impact on Indigenous peoples whereby communities have been portrayed as simplistic and primitive. According to Smith (1999), these portrayals played a fundamental role in the justification of accelerated colonization throughout history. There continues to be research carried out that subscribes to these damaging research relationships. In this way, it is important to acknowledge the potential risks of non-Indigenous researchers working within Indigenous research contexts and to work to mitigate them as much as possible.

In response to such critiques, Indigenous methodologies have gained increasing recognition within academia in recent years (Kovach, 2010; Battiste, 2000; Wilson, 2009). As this research analyzed the intersections between traditional Inuit and Western visions of success, it was important that the research approach encompass all aspects of this issue. In this way, the focus of this research provided a unique opportunity to explore a methodological approach that could fulfill formal university protocol while also honouring Inuit cultural values and ways of knowing.

One of the most fundamental methodological and ethical questions that this research seeks to address concerns the incorporation of appropriate Inuit protocols and methodology. Importantly, this research does not claim to be rooted in an Inuit driven research paradigm. Rather, it strives to embody a respectful, reciprocal relational approach derived from

collaborative research done by and with Indigenous scholars. The reason for this is twofold. First, as a settler/non-Inuk researcher, this research cannot represent an Inuit methodology from the position of their language, culture and representational worldview and perspective. As a Qallunaaq/white, middle class, able-bodied man who has grown up in a predominantly Western cultural context, I must consider how this web of privilege frames my approach to the research and creates a power relationship between the participants and myself. Simultaneously, it is also important to locate and acknowledge how my experience of growing up in an Inuit-majority context of Iqaluit, and being accepted as ningauq (in-law) within an Inuit family, undoubtedly impacted the research process as it unfolded. In addition, adhering to an Inuit-derived research methodology would require a fundamental rethinking of the entire research process because post-secondary institutions and education in general prioritize Western notions of knowledge building and sharing (McGrath, 2011). As such, researching from an Inuit perspective would not be possible within the restrictive parameters set by Western epistemological norms. Tooma (2016), one of the participants in the study, touched on the epistemological tensions in stating:

[t]o be honest this kind of research will always be Qallunaattitut. No matter what! Inuit don't go out there and try to figure something out. Like my grandpa. For them, this is not research; this is being nosey (Tooma, p. 6).

In spite of these considerations, I remained dedicated to ensuring that this research was informed by my growing awareness of Inuit cultural values and following appropriate protocols. In this sense, this research is one step in a life-long relationship with Inuit communities.

Indigenous /Inuttitut Paradigm

Over time, it became clear to me that this research is, and had always been, rooted in an Inuttitut paradigm. According to Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2001), this may also be referred to

as researching from an *Indigenist* paradigm. As Wilson writes on the distinction between Indigenous and the term *Indigenist*:

While *Indigenous* describes some peoples' ethnicity and claims to distinct identities, it is a marker of race-based difference. However, *Indigenist* is also a descriptive label of thinking I know and have been taught by my Elders. Others are welcome to share in and benefit from this knowledge and use it in their own way. You are doing Indigenist research if you share its beliefs and philosophical underpinnings and put them into action in the knowledge-building process (p. 313).

Similarly, whereas the term 'Inuit' describes a group of people, the term 'Inuttitut' can be literally translated as 'the Inuk way'. This distinction is significant. Although Indigenist and Inuttitut research share similar perspectives and beliefs, being rooted within an Inuttitut paradigm necessitates engagement with culturally specific approaches associated with conducting research in Inuit contexts and communities. These specificities include understanding appropriate Northern language and conversational etiquette, understanding the nature of the colonial experience in Nunavut, as well as a range of cultural ethics that will be elaborated upon below.

In line with an Indigenist paradigm, the underlying philosophical pillars of Inuttitut are ingrained in relationships (Healey & Tagak Sr., 2014; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As noted in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, the complex web of relations influenced all levels of the research process, from determining an appropriate research question, to carrying out research ethics, gathering of data, interpreting the data, and disseminating results. Moreover, relationships also informed all processes leading up to the research and will continue after it is completed. In sum, this research emerged from, exists within, and seeks to further establish an Inuttitut

paradigm within formal academic discourse. Accordingly, referring to this project as being situated within an Inuttitut paradigm represents an accurate description. At the same time, an Inuttitut paradigm provides an appropriate space for a settler researcher to establish a meaningful relationship with the subject of study. A further advantage of situating this research within an Indigenist paradigm extend from the opportunities this creates to explore the relationships that exist between Western and Inuit methodological approaches. After establishing an Indigenist paradigm to guide the research, it became increasingly important to interrogate my own positionality in relation to the proposed project.

Despite the limitations that it creates, several Indigenous authors (Battiste, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2001) write that it remains possible for settler researchers to engage in Indigenous-centered research in appropriate ways. In response to the question of whether or not non-Indigenous people can engage in this kind of research, Wilson (2001) answers with an “emphatic yes”. He explains further in stating:

Just as you do not have to be a woman to be a feminist, you do not need to be Indigenous to do Indigenist research. You are doing Indigenist research if you share its beliefs and philosophical underpinnings and put them into action in the knowledge-building process (Wilson, 2013, p. 313).

In this view, a positive research relationship is possible provided appropriate protocols are followed and proper considerations are made. This includes embracing a position of relational accountability. At the heart of Indigenist paradigm, Wilson (2001) writes, is “a process of systematically bringing relationships into consciousness and becoming accountable with, for and to them” (p. 314). Grounding research in an Indigenist paradigm, therefore, involves a strong commitment from non-Indigenous researchers, writers and scholars to both empower and

validate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (Kovach 2009; Wilson 2001). Additionally, as noted by Battiste (2008), it requires researchers to consider the collective benefits of research, and particularly that it should “empower and benefit Indigenous communities and cultures, not just researchers, their educational institutions or Canadian society” (p. 501).

Engaging Personal Location with the Research

As a settler/ningauq researcher working within an Inuit research context, the process of understanding the complexities of relationships takes time and is ongoing. It is important to reflect critically on my personal location within the research, including my relationship to the subject matter, the participants and the communities, as well as the broader historical relationship between settler researchers and Indigenous communities. Presenting this web of relationships within the linear structure of an academic thesis also presents a unique set of challenges. The following section outlines the web of relationships that inform my research methodology.

As a settler researcher, I had to carefully consider how Western values and experience influenced the research process. A number of authors discuss the dangers, tensions and requirements of settlers while performing research within Indigenous contexts (Kovach, 2009, 2012; Smith, 1999; Barker, 2006; Wilson, 2001). In her book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, Cree educator Kovach (2009) writes that establishing research relationships with Indigenous communities as a non-Indigenous [settler] “begins with decolonizing one’s mind and heart” (p. 169). As she goes on to write, it also means, “exploring one’s own beliefs and values about knowledge and how it shapes practices. It is about examining whiteness. It is about examining power. It is ongoing” (ibid.). As such, engaging in ongoing critical self-reflection is an integral process when developing and implementing methodology. Through this, it becomes possible to understand the biases, culturally rooted

values, and beliefs that I bring to the project and how these values influence the design and process of the research.

In exploring my own beliefs, values, and experience, I sought to understand how my settler identity could influence the research. In his master's thesis, non-Indigenous settler scholar Adam J. Barker (2003) writes that settler society can be described as being "rooted in Western traditions and institutions and founded upon colonized territories" (p. 1). Similarly, Maori scholar Linda Smith argues that non-Indigenous researchers must be aware of colonial perspectives and how they invariably impact their research (1999). Through my own research, I attempted to resist these tendencies. Accordingly, this research is guided by an effort to address and challenge these power dynamics. It seeks to interrogate the role of privilege, and in particular how my settler heritage influences my perspectives and represents the starting point for engaging in the challenging and continuous work of building meaningful and respectful relationships.

In addition to considering how my personal identity affects my perspectives and my research methodology, I also sought to challenge the historically negative impacts of settler research on Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999). As part of this process, it is critically important to acknowledge and actively interrogate the presence of colonial assumptions, privilege and power dynamics. This is necessary in order to avoid reaffirming colonial research interpretation and narrative that ignores local perspectives and perpetuate stereotypes that are damaging to Indigenous communities.

My research is unequivocally marked by the privilege I hold as a white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual, English-speaking man who has had a predominantly Western upbringing. With that said, it is important to acknowledge and understand the foundations of that

experience in terms of how it has impacted my experiences later in life. Not surprisingly, these experiences have profoundly impacted my research process.

As a final note on my positionality, it is crucial for other settler researchers to understand that given my social location and identity, it is not possible to choose any other path except that of an outsider, even though my experience living in Nunavut has made certain aspects of this experience easier. Throughout this research, I faced internal and external debate concerning what an appropriate research approach looks like in this place and within this cultural context. In an effort to unpack this, I consulted with members of my community, with family members, and with some leading scholars on settler research in Indigenous communities. These consultations were critical given the many potential risks that can result when settler researchers seek Indigenous approaches to affirm their own perspectives, including the threat of tokenism and false substantiation, to name only a few. The basis for claiming a genuine Inuit methodology is rooted in my life-long relationship with my community and my family. Beyond words on a page, this extends from my responsibility to nurture a strong web of relationships and to be accountable within them. In short, before claiming an Inuit methodology, it is critically important that settler researchers engage in intense critical reflection of their own positionality, as well as their own web of relationships.

Research Design

Once the research paradigm that guides this project was established, it became necessary to choose a methodology. Given that the goal of the research was to explore the stories of former Inuit high school students in Nunavut, I decided that a qualitative research study using natural conversational methods in dialogue with the participants would be effective. This is because of the possibility this approach creates for allowing participants to share their experiences through

their own personal stories in a natural setting using a flexible interview guide. According to Cree scholar Margaret Kovach (2010), this is an appropriate approach because,

Conversational method aligns with an Indigenous worldview that honours orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition. Story is a relational process that is accompanied by particular protocol consistent with tribal knowledge identified as guiding the research (p. 42).

A critical component of each of these approaches is the central role of both stories and relationships within the research process. In what follows, I outline my initial efforts to employ a conversational method. Then, in the spirit of an Indigenist approach, I will outline what steps I took to include particular Inuit research values.

This research employed a qualitative conversational approach while ensuring the centrality of Inuit cultural values and protocols. To carry out this research I employed the following definition of conversational method put forward by Margaret Kovach (2010):

The conversational method is ... a method of gathering knowledge based on oral storytelling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves a dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core (p. 40).

Based on this explanation of conversational method, the research sought to engage with the stories and experiences of former Inuit high school students who are defining and redefining success in their own lives. The goal of conversational method, therefore, is to develop an understanding of how personal stories and experiences intersect while providing a window into larger social phenomenon. Like stories and experiences, the conversation itself continues to

develop and evolve. As such, conversational method does not view research as an examination of static texts; rather, it acknowledges the complex interactions of multiple overlapping and continuously developing stories. Although a number of characteristics of conversational method are commonly shared with other Western and Indigenous research methodologies, Kovach establishes it as a unique approach to research based on a number of core research principles, including relationships and storytelling (2010).

A number of characteristics establish the conversational method inquiry as an appropriate methodology for this study. Storytelling is a natural means of knowledge transfer within Inuit cultural contexts. Furthermore, storytelling evokes memories of the natural environment and the places one has been. As such, it represents the main source of research data within the conversational method (Kovach, 2010). In my own approach with participants, capturing their lived experiences expressed through their stories was central to my data gathering process. Each participant shared their experiences, memories and values as this related to how they personally define success. This in turn provided strong data from which to extrapolate a theory of success grounded in Inuit perspectives. Given that developing theory from lived experience represented an important goal of the research, the conversational method allowed me to work within an Indigenist paradigm, and to appreciate and value the social construction of success within both an individual and community context. In other words, this approach allowed participants to share their stories on their own terms, in their own voice, and sometimes in their own language — without placing limitations on where or how they experienced success (for example, in schools or on the land). Moreover, as there is very little published literature on Inuit students' perspectives of success, a conversational method offered an effective means of building theory from a relatively small research base. Accordingly, the conversational method was well suited to

this research in that it provided a means to gather data in an Indigenist paradigm and within an Inuit context.

Another pillar of the conversational method is the acknowledgement of the significant position of the researcher. Conversational method acknowledges the critical role that the researcher plays in the interpretation, analysis, and construction of the research process (Kovach 2010). Kovach writes that the personal narratives of the researcher influence the research, revealing how the researcher is always an active participant in the research process (p. 32). By establishing a space for a relationship to be developed and enriched, a conversational method approach helps bridge the researcher/participant divide. Ultimately, ‘researchers’ are recognized as a part of the same community, and thus impacted by research issues.

An additional strength of a conversational method in this research was that it allowed me to have a pre-existing relationship with the research participants. Kovach’s approach to conversational method encourages a relationship between researcher and participants. As she explains, “a pre-existing relationship between researcher and participant, where relationships are built on trust, can add a depth of reflection and engagement to conversation” (Kovach, 2010, p. 98). In this thesis, employing a conversational method allowed me to conduct research within an Inuit paradigm by creating space to explore how my own relationship to success both complemented and contrasted the experiences of research participants.

Honouring Protocol: Inuit Research Maligait

“What is my role as a researcher and what are my obligations?

You then have to ask yourself: Does this method help me fulfill my

obligations in my role?” (Wilson 2001, p. 5)

The quote above speaks to the on-going negotiations that are required to determine and implement the most appropriate research approach. Once a conversational method approach situated within an Inuttitut paradigm was identified as the appropriate methodology for this research, it was important to supplement it with Inuit cultural, ethical, or research considerations in order to fulfill all the research objectives. To firmly root my inquiry in an Inuttitut paradigm, I employed a number of Inuit research *maligait*. It is important to note that the conversational method not only allows, but also necessitates that culturally specific research protocols be implemented in order to honour the relational nature of this approach.

The importance of Inuit culture to this research cannot be overstated. To conduct research within Inuit contexts, researchers must acknowledge and adhere to local protocols (Healey & Tagak Sr., 2014). To identify the protocols that should be followed, I consulted the work of Inuit and Northern scholars. For the purpose of this research, I have termed these protocols ‘Inuit Research *Maligait*’. It is important to note that the term ‘*maligait*’ is seldom used when conducting research. In order to ensure that I was not imposing my settler perspective on the term, I consulted with Inuttitut speakers and confirmed that it could be applied to the revised research methodology I had proposed.

While *maligait* are conventionally defined as ‘laws’, this does not encompass the term’s full meaning. In her master’s thesis, Inuk scholar Jackie Price (2007) evokes the words of Elder, Aupilarjuk, who states *maligait* are more properly defined as,

Things that had to be done...When I think of paper I think you can tear it up and the laws are gone. The *maligait* of the Inuit are not on paper. They are inside people’s heads and they will not disappear or be torn to pieces. Even if a person dies, the *maligait* will not disappear (p. 14).

In approaching research within an Inuit context, I have noted certain *maligait*, or ‘things that must be done’, to ensure the research is rooted within Inuit cultural values and thus proceeds in a good way. A number of foundational Inuit research *maligait* informed the research process. In the following section, I will introduce and discuss four foundational *maligait*, including: 1) honouring relationships; 2) food sharing; 3) language; and 4) community accountability. Despite my efforts to be broad and holistic, it must be emphasized that the value system underpinning Inuit *maligait* involve a complex epistemology, and I have only identified a small number of protocols that must inform the research relationship within Inuit epistemologies. Furthermore, the categorization of these *maligait* is a Western approach to organization, detracting from their existence within a broader holistic, epistemological web.

Honouring Relationships

Honouring relationships is a fundamental *maligait* that informed this research. As previously mentioned, I had a prior relationship to all participants in the research. Three of the five participants in this study are now related to me through my Inuit relatives. In the past, conventional Western research approaches have discouraged personal relationships with research participants on that basis that this compromises objectivity. Conversely, within this research model, relationships are seen as highly advantageous (McGrath 2011; pp. 28-30). In their article, *Piliriqatigiiniq: ‘Working in a collaborative way for the common good*, Nunavummiut scholars Gwen Healy and Andrew Tagak Sr. (2014) write:

From a relational perspective, establishing trust and accountability is part of the development of a relationship with a colleague or research participant, which then feeds into the entire research method, from establishing rigor to respecting an ethical Indigenous knowledge framework to sharing and disseminating the results of a study (Healey & Tagak

Sr., p. 4).

The importance of honouring relationships within Inuit research contexts is further substantiated by academic literature (Kovach, 2010; McGrath, 2011; Price, 2007). In applying these concepts to the research at hand, the accumulated knowledge and relationships that formed between the researcher and participants represented vital components for creating a comfortable space where participants could express themselves freely and comfortably. On a deeper level, personal familiarity with the personal participants, combined with the accumulation of community, cultural, and historical knowledge, influenced the arc of the interviews. This knowledge, gained by nurturing a web of relationships over time, had significant influence over the direction the semi-structured interviews took. As the interviews progressed, the relational knowledge shared between myself and the participants enriched the trajectory of the interviews, providing a relaxed and trusting bond that allowed conversation and stories to flow. To further highlight the importance of the researcher/participant relationship, it is helpful to envision how the interviews could have gone differently had I not had pre-existing personal and community relationships. At the very least, the research would have lacked both breadth and depth.

Community Accountability

The next research maligait I followed, and will continue to follow even upon completion of this degree, is community accountability. As a settler researcher who occupies a unique position within my community, it is important to acknowledge the level of accountability I must follow when engaging in research. Healey and Tagak Sr. (2014) write of this in stating, “[w]e become part of the circles of relationships that are connected to one another and to which we are also accountable” (p. 4). Both during the research and after the research is completed, I am accountable to myself to ensure that I honour my own positionality within the research, to the

participants in order to accurately capture their voices within the work, and to my community as a whole to ensure that this work benefits and empowers our community. My positionality as a Qallunaat *ningauq* (in-law) raised in Iqaluit, who also had the privilege of accessing postsecondary education, adds another layer to the need for accountability. I have a responsibility to ensure that I approach this research in a way that honours community protocols, while also guaranteeing that Inuit peoples and communities are represented appropriately.

Following a history of research that has damaged Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999), the aforementioned responsibility and acknowledgement of accountability cannot be understated. Colonization is not an abstract process; it is lived and experienced everyday in our community as a force that haunts both the past and the present. On the one hand, research can facilitate and extend colonization. Conversely, it may also disrupt it. Engaging in this research, therefore, is part of my own ongoing efforts as a member of an Inuit community to understand and work towards addressing the impacts of colonization. In this respect, the scope of this research is far greater than a singular step towards academic achievement within an academic institution. In most cases, when settlers conduct research on Indigenous contexts, the researcher is an outsider. As such, the research is almost always extractive in nature. In contrast, I am, and will forever be, accountable to the community of Iqaluit, my Inuk family, and the way I represent my colleagues and friends as participants in the research. In short, my own relationship to this research, as well as that of the participants, does not end with the submission of this project. We will continue to work and live in Nunavut where the consequences of colonial definitions of success have serious implications for Inuit, while Qallunaat epistemologies continue to hold a position of power.

Food Sharing

In concert with efforts to honour personal and community relationships, food sharing was

an important component of the research. Authors Bennett and Rowley (2004) write of the importance of food sharing in their seminal text *Uqalurait*. In the book they reference Inutiq, an Inuk elder, who states:

When the dog teams returned they had big loads of meat... After they completed the task of storing the meat, my grandfather Inutiq went outdoors; as he got to the entrance he started to shout in a loud voice: “Tamuattuaaq, tamuattuaaq, avagusukkama, tamuaattuaaq.” [Something to chew, something to chew, it is my wish to share it, something to chew.] Everyone came so that our home was packed with people (Bennett and Rowley, 2004, p.87).

In her Master's thesis, Inuk scholar Jackie Price (2007) elaborates on the importance of sharing food:

Food sharing is an expression of thankfulness either for a successful hunt or for the arrival of visitors ... Food sharing is practiced faithfully and constantly, so much so that it almost seems obligatory. Yet, families share their food willingly and with kindness. Inuit understand and appreciate that celebrating with food strengthens the feeling of collectiveness and community. It is a practice whose end results reaffirm the usefulness of the practice. (2007, p. 48)

Food sharing was a critical aspect of my research and sought to affirm this long-standing practice of nurturing relationships (Bennett & Rowley, 2004). Even when food was not available, such as when an interview occurred in a coffee shop, we shared tea and coffee instead. This may seem insignificant, but there is a growing body of research that substantiates these practices as falling in line with appropriate protocols when engaging in research within Inuit communities (Healey & Tagak Sr., 2014; Price, 2008, McGrath, 2011).

Language Considerations

In her thesis, Janet Tamalik McGrath (2011) acknowledges the advantageous position of understanding Inuttitut when engaging in Inuit research. She elaborates on an important concept of *naalattiarahuarnira*, which she translates to, “my learning to try and listen well” (p. 31). Here, Tamalik is referring to her lifelong relationship with the Inuttitut language and how it continues to inform all aspects of her research approach.

This is highly applicable to this research in that language holds an important position within the research process. Although interviews took place predominantly in English, Inuttitut phrases, terms, and sentences were exchanged throughout. Understanding the significance of these Inuttitut references was again critical in determining an appropriate path forward for the interviews. Furthermore, the conversational English and terminology used was highly appropriate for the circumstances. In other words, as a result of my relationship to the community, conversations occurred in a way of speaking that is common in Nunavut, with every effort made to resist academic vernacular. Ensuring that conversations involved mutually understandable terminology in turn enriched the interview data.

The research maligait outlined above are all critical factors that shaped and will continue to shape this research. Further, these research maligait were critical in rooting the conversational methodology in Inuit cultural and research protocols. In this way, this embedding process only served to strengthen the overall research. Before moving on, I want to extend my thanks to Tamalik for reminding me of this responsibility.

Methods

By supplementing Kovach’s (2009) conversational method with Inuit research maligait, I was able to establish an appropriate research methodology. The requirement to fulfill cultural

protocols — in this research referred to as research maligait — throughout all stages of the research represents a crucial step that a non-Indigenous researcher may miss if they did not know the community. It is possible that these facets of the research may be viewed as outside of the methodological scope of this study; however, within an Inuit research framework, I viewed them as fundamental to the entire process.

The methodology employed to carry out this research mirrored my complicated positionality within the research. The research approach was in many ways hybrid in nature, employing a conversational method through a Western lens, which was in turn situated within an Inuit research framework. The research questions and protocols related to dialogue, participant recruitment and engagement, and an overall approach to the research were heavily informed by Inuit cultural values. This approach was gained from my knowledge and experience living in Nunavut with Inuit and having learned their language.

Recruiting Participants and Context

Participants for this research consisted of five Inuit who had attended and graduated from high school in Nunavut, who self-identified as Inuk, and who currently call Nunavut their home. Although the initial proposal for this thesis stated that participants would be required to have attended school in Nunavut within the last ten years, it quickly became apparent that this was an unnecessary limitation because of the small number of participants recruited. Maintaining this relatively small sample size kept the amount of data manageable, while allowing for a sufficiently robust conversation and discussion of the related themes that arose during the interviews.

It is a rare event in small Inuit communities that the youth do not know each other or have not spent time together in a collective community. For this study, participants were

recruited through community social networks in Iqaluit, and they were either from Iqaluit or other communities across Nunavut. Although my goal was to attain a diverse sample of participants in terms of age, gender, and location within Nunavut, with only five participants such diversity could not be attained. That said, the five participants did provide enough information for the study to explore their experiences in the North. Despite this small sample size, the conversational method maintains that participant stories still provide important insight into changing perspectives of success. Accordingly, this research does not attempt to provide sweeping evidence to support theories, but rather offers an important starting point to guide further analysis.

The participant group consisted of three women and two men between 24 and 30 years of age. All participants were fluent in Inuttitut, although some were more comfortable expressing themselves in the ancestral language than others. Family circumstances ranged widely between participants with some participants being raised by their biological parents while others were adopted by other family members. I include reference to family circumstances in the participant profiles, providing additional emphasis when participants spoke about or identified their family life as significant to their learning or their development of notions of success. Furthermore, understandings of success as conveyed by the participants were strongly influenced by whether or not they are parents themselves. While some participants had biological children, all were actively engaged in raising children of the families they lived with.

All participants attended the majority of their elementary and secondary schooling in Nunavut. There was a wide range of educational experience among the participants. While some self-identified as excelling in school, others encountered challenges and at certain times discontinued high school. Eventually, all participants graduated high school.

Similar to high school education experience, all participants had a wide range of post secondary education. It is important to note that all participants attended the Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) program in Ottawa, a pre-college program for Inuit students. Although it was not the intention of this research to interview NS students, it quickly became a theme of interest in discussing perspectives of success. One participant attended Piqqusilirivvik, the Inuit Cultural School, which had a significant impact on his perspectives concerning success. All participants who pursued college or university discontinued their post-secondary at certain points, with some eventually finishing, and at least one or two not completing their respective programs.

Data Gathering Methods

The main source of data for this thesis is drawn from conversations and a focus group with selected participants. The data gathering stage of the interviews went smoothly. As a result of the pre-established relationship between the participants and me, the depth of discussion during the interviews evolved quite quickly. The previous relationship also eased the process of scheduling and conducting the interviews. Confidentiality requirements, as dictated by the University of Saskatchewan's research ethics rules, represented a more challenging dimension of the research process. At times I experienced a conflict between the relaxed, conversational approach the participants desired, and the formal, procedural requirements around confidentiality as set out by the university. It is significant to note that not all of the participants were equally concerned with having their identities concealed. In fact, participants occasionally expressed that there may even be merit in having their real names associated with the research to encourage other youth who are struggling to find balance within their lives. Despite this, I had committed to certain ethical principles as outlined by the University of Saskatchewan, and, in the end, I chose to remove any identifying information in order to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

Conversations

Interviews were carried out between April 15 and May 20, 2015 and ranged in length from 20 to 70 minutes. The location of interviews varied depending on the preferences of the participants and ranged from coffee shops to participants' homes. Before beginning the interviews, participants were asked to provide either oral or written consent. Interviews were recorded on a password-protected smartphone. At the outset of each of the five interviews, I employed conversational methods, explained ethical considerations, confirmed their understanding of the project, outlined their roles, my responsibilities, and confirmed their consent. I also provided a brief, spoken introduction to my project that was both casual and conversational in nature. Each interviewee was provided with a short abstract outlining the project (Appendix C). This abstract was either read orally or offered in hard copy, along with a consent form, which was also read aloud and discussed to ensure understanding. Of the five participants who completed interviews, three took time to read the abstract, while the remaining two agreed that the oral introduction was sufficient. As a final step, the recorded interviews were sent to a secure email account before being downloaded to a password-protected computer for transcription and analysis.

With respect to format, the interviews were semi-structured and casual in tone. They were mostly conducted in English, although participants and the interviewer occasionally spoke in Inuttitut to convey or emphasize specific points. Prior to each interview, I clarified that participants could express themselves in whichever language they felt most comfortable. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that participants could actively share information they deemed relevant to the research as a whole. While most of the interviews involved some explicit discussion of how the participant defined success, the conversation generally evolved

organically, taking on a life of their own. This was an important aspect of the research in that participants were able to speak to subjects they felt were important to understanding the overarching topic. As such, participants were also able to maintain a high level of control over how the conversation progressed. Furthermore, although an interview outline was provided to each participant, this was not strictly adhered to in order to allow participants to determine the direction of the conversation. All interviews began and ended with the question, “How do you define success?” By asking this question twice, participants were able to further reflect and elaborate upon their initial responses. This, in turn, allowed participants the opportunity to incorporate any new or additional revelations or insights that emerged through the discussion. Most of the interviewees indicated that were satisfied with the discussion. When asked if they had anything else to add, many declined to offer any further comment. Two participants submitted additional data through emails and phone conversations.

The impact of having a pre-established relationship with the research participants cannot be understated. These relationships were instrumental for ensuring the comfort of participants. Moreover, it influenced both the tone and quality of the interviews. For example, conversations were sometimes emotional, canvassing humorous stories to some participants coming to tears when reflecting on their experience. In addition, these relationships impacted the direction of the interviews in that participants understood that I had a certain level of experience with education in Nunavut. From the outset, a foundation of mutual understanding based on the shared experience of growing up in Nunavut also allowed the participants and me to establish a deeper conversation. When some participants became emotional, I continually reminded them that there were no time limits and that they could discontinue their participation at any point. While silences or lulls in the conversation occurred, these were not awkward. Rather, any awkwardness

was always addressed with humour. By and large, participants shared their experiences passionately and with interest.

Country Food Focus Group

In addition to the interviews, a ‘country food’ focus group took place on May 25, 2015. Three out of the five participants were able to attend, while the other two were unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts. As per tradition, the focus group took place on the floor of my kitchen around the food. Mattaaq (whale skin), tuttuminq and iqaluminiaq quaq (frozen Caribou and Arctic Char) were shared on cardboard between the researcher and participants. Importantly, these foods are Northern delicacies, and sharing them is often viewed as customary protocol for engaging socially with community members. Sharing these foods signifies a commitment to nurturing relationships and presenting a comfortable space for participants.

Although at the outset of the individual interviews I explained that the focus group would be a part of the research process, it was important to reiterate to the participants that participation in the focus group was strictly confidential. Prior to the initiation of the focus group, I reminded the group that everything that was said during the focus group would be kept within the group. Consent was once again explained and confirmed. Following this, the data gathering process began. To generate discussion, I reintroduced the same question that drove the individual interviews: “How do you define success in your life?”. Although I anticipated a certain level of repetition in the responses, it was important to have these discussions in a group setting so that participants were able to hear each other’s stories, build on shared experiences, and identify common themes. Moreover, the country food focus group was extremely effective in generating further discussion and storytelling in a manner that was both comfortable and culturally appropriate. This was evidenced by the fact that all participants commented on how this was a

unique method that would be useful in other research contexts. Although country food feasts are somewhat common in Nunavut, all participants remarked that centering the research process on country food was effective. As an active hunter and fisherman, I continue to share part of my catch with the research participants as an ongoing gesture of thanks. Although this is beyond the scope of this research project, it is important to note how this practice represents a continued affirmation of relations within our community.

Guiding Research Questions

A number of important factors influenced the development of the research question that guided this project. This entailed a long process of revision before I arrived at the summary that follows. Initially the research project began as an exploration of how students perceive their cultural and linguistic learning within institutions of formal education. It quickly became clear, however, that this focus would yield a narrow view of the educational processes that inform young people's learning in Nunavut. Eventually the final research question evolved to include how Inuit students gauge the importance of cultural and linguistic learning in how they define success.

How people define success in their lives is both complex and influenced by several factors, including culture, family, and social and economic considerations, to name only a few. Within the historical and cultural context of Nunavut, Elders who grew up immersed in traditional Inuit society have very different understandings of success than the current generation of Inuit youth. Moreover, youth in the South have dissimilar perspectives of success from those in Nunavut. Although there is a growing body of academic literature that explores perspectives of Indigenous student success (Bazylak, 2002; Canada Council of Learning, 2007, 2009; Claypool, 2013; Moon, 2014), very little is written within an Inuit context. This is worth

engaging with because how success is defined has an overriding influence on many aspects of society, from economic decisions to educational policy, curriculum and pedagogy. Accordingly, it eventually became clear that exploring how Inuit students define success would help shed light on how they gauge the importance and relevance of Inuit culture and language in their lives, and the role they may have in their choices throughout their lives.

It is important to note that the final research question is not beyond critique. ‘Success’ is itself a highly loaded term that carries significant cultural, economic, political, familial, and even spiritual meaning. Reinforced by institutions, politics, and society at large, the dominant definition of success reinforces a colonial worldview. By associating success with education and employment, the Western definition of success was and continues to be a defining characteristic of ongoing colonization (Battiste, 2013; Canada Council of Learning, 2007). There is a growing body of literature that explores how Indigenous communities define success as distinct from dominant Western perspectives (Bouvier, Battiste & McLaughlin, 2016; Canada Council of Learning, 2007; Canadian Council of Learning, 2009). For this reason, centering the research question on ‘success’ had potential pitfalls insofar as it risked triggering strictly colonial ideas of success among participants, such as schooling, employment, or wealth. This was one of the principal critiques brought up during the official defense of the thesis proposal for this research. In an attempt to address this issue, a discussion of the subjective nature of the word ‘success’ was incorporated at the beginning of all interviews. Despite these considerations, this project set out to answer the following core research question: How do former Inuit high school students define success? Furthermore, while not central to the study, it also aimed to address the following three sub-questions. First, what role do Inuit cultural notions of success play in student perspectives of success? Second, what processes help other youth achieve their notions of

success? Finally, what role does/should the school play in helping former Inuit students achieve these notions of success?

Preparing Data

Data organization and transcription took place in June 2015. A few important measures were taken as the interviews were transcribed. First, community specific identifiers were removed. This was done to ensure confidentiality given that, several participants referred to specific communities in Nunavut when expressing their views. In quoting these passages, I replaced the names with alternate identifiers in order to ensure the anonymity of the participants. This was an important step when considering that some of the communities referenced are quite small, thereby increasing the chances that participants could be inadvertently identified. In certain circumstances, and mostly where the participant's identification of a community was central to what they were trying to express, I removed the name of the community and inserted more general reference terms. Conversely, references to Iqaluit remain in the quotes, as the capital city is large enough to pose no threat to the identification of the participants.

An additional consideration during transcription was flow editing. Once transcripts were complete, the researcher reviewed and made minor 'flow' edits to remove superfluous language such as 'umm', 'like', and incomplete sentences. This was done at the request of some of the participants, but also to ensure more effective use of the data. Notwithstanding this approach, I left the majority of the transcripts intact to ensure that the voices and statements of the participants were represented as genuinely and accurately as possible. As a final step, transcripts were sent to participants for their review, along with an invitation to suggest changes. It is relevant to note that all responded positively and asked that the transcripts be preserved in their original form. Moreover, participants provided minimal feedback, and mostly focused on

reiterating certain sections that they felt accurately reflected their experience.

Methods for Data Analysis

Engaging in an analysis of lived experience can be a complicated task. In particular, analyzing transcripts containing the deeply personal testimony of research participants to determine which sections should be incorporated or cut from the final thesis is challenging. This is especially true of issues that are shaped by colonial histories, which may in turn be triggering or traumatic for participants. As previously noted, participants displayed a range of emotions during the interviews. Some cried, and some got angry. All participants laughed, and all expressed deep passion towards the topic. It is impossible to express this emotion in writing. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge and attempt to honour the deeply emotional and personal nature of the interviews. The task of presenting findings assumes an added level of difficulty when working within an area of study with relatively little published literature. To overcome these challenges, I attempted to moor my analysis of the data in my own knowledge drawn from lived experience growing up and living in Nunavut.

Analysis of the transcripts took place from June to August 2015. Interview and focus group transcripts were read over a number of times. Themes were organized into the following two sections: 1) Stories of Success, and 2) Exploring Inuit Success.

Stories of Success

The first phase of the data analysis process entailed introducing the participants. From the interview transcripts, I created narrative accounts, or ‘stories of success’, for each participant. These stories provided context and background on the lives and experience of each participant. They are meant to provide insight into the various personal and social dynamics in each

participant's life. Topics covered in these stories range from family and community life, relationship with Inuttitut language, and introductory words on perspectives of success. To avoid the risk of projecting my personal biases on these accounts, in some cases the stories of success were constructed in collaboration with the research participants. This was done to ensure the representations extracted from the conversations accurately described participant experiences. A total of five narrative accounts from participants were created with an additional account created by myself. Throughout this process I attempted to acknowledge how my relationship with each participant shaped each account.

Throughout this section I quoted participants extensively. This was done to ensure that the participants' voices were centered within the final thesis. I add commentary and interpretation while trying to ensure sufficient space for the participants to be the primary actors in shaping the overall picture of what success means to them. With that said, I did attempt to create a thread between all quotations in an effort to effectively convey the themes drawn from the interviews. Additionally, the dedication to self-representing voice minimizes the opportunity for the words of the participants to be filtered through my own inherent biases, an important consideration as a non-Indigenous researcher who is engaging in research on Indigenous issues.

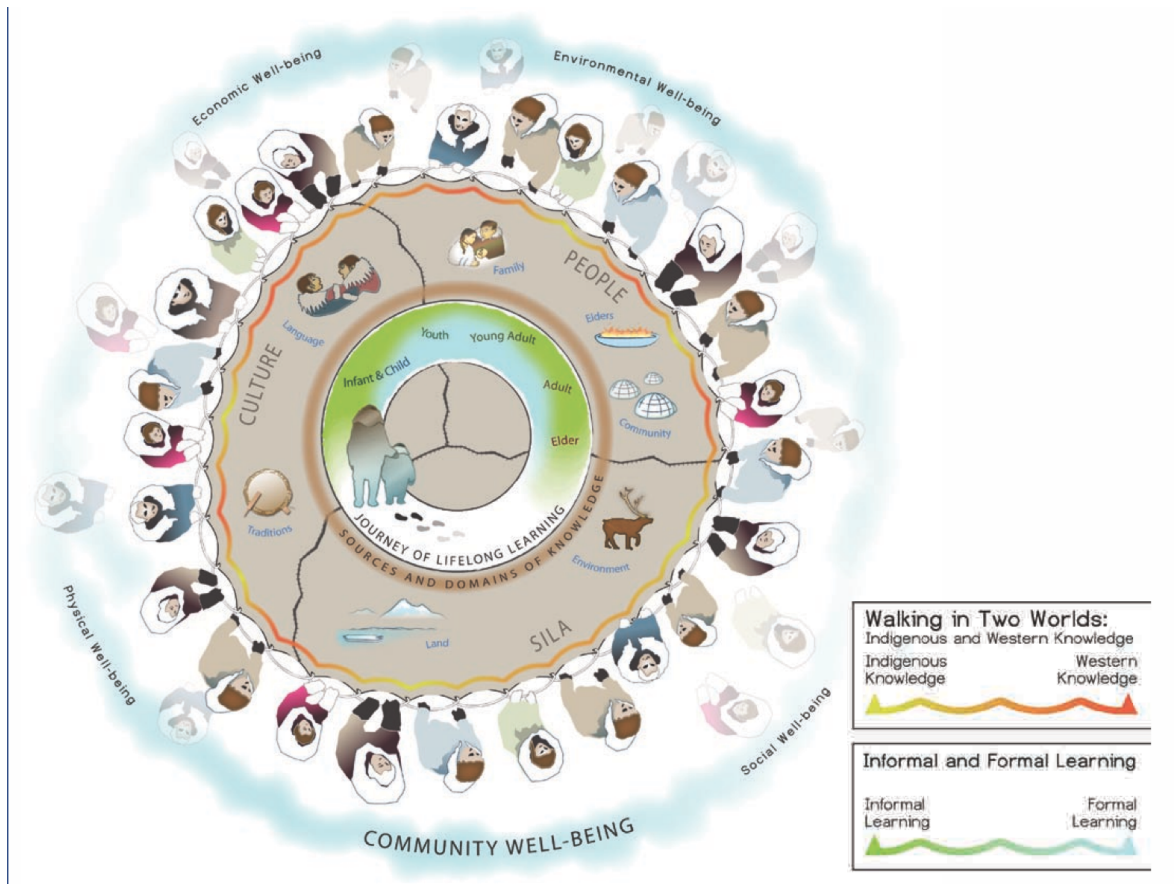
Exploring Inuit Success

Over the course of analyzing the data, Inuit cultural success emerged as a central theme that called for deeper analysis. As a non-Inuk researcher, it became clear that using thematic analysis to interpret and analyze these themes was not ideal. For this reason, it was important to supplement this analysis of Inuit success by consulting established culturally relevant literature. This in turn involved a process of 'provisional coding,' which involves analysis based on a predetermined set of codes (Saldana, 2009, p. 120-123; Vizina 2010, p. 113). This type of coding

involves anticipating certain themes and categories that will emerge in the research. The imported codes were drawn from the Canada Council of Learning's (CCL) 'Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model', outlined in their 2007 document, *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Learning*. The Inuit-centered model was developed through a number of workshops with Inuit educators and academics that sought to establish Aboriginal-centered learning models. Identifying domains and realms of knowledge was one component of a larger project geared toward understanding Aboriginal learning as rooted in a lifelong process that is distinct from Eurocentric approaches. As stated in the report:

Learning for Aboriginal people is rooted in relationships with the natural world and the world of people (i.e., the self, the family, ancestors, clan, community, nation and other nations) and their experiences with languages, spirituality, traditions and ceremonies... These complex relationships and experiences are represented in all of the Holistic Lifelong Learning Models as Sources and Domains of Knowledge. (p. 18)

The CCL identified three core concepts that underwrite their recommendation for 'holistic learning models' appropriate to First Nations, Métis and Inuit. The Inuit learning model has three pillars: 1) Learning from the world of people (Family, Elders, and Community); 2) Learning from and about Culture (traditions, and language); and, 3) Learning from and about Sila (Land and Environment) (CCL, 2007, p. 21). These realms and domains provide an important basis on which to discuss how success might be understood within an Inuit cultural context. For the purpose of this study, I modified the wording of the realms and domains to facilitate a discussion about success, substituting the word 'success' for 'knowledge', resulting in the phrase, 'Domains and Realms of Success.'



(Canada Council of Learning 2007)

Along with domains of success, two other thematic threads were useful in tying this study together, as illustrated by the figure above. The “Walking In Two Worlds” coloured thread that ties the blanket together symbolizes the balance of Indigenous and Western knowledge. Secondly, the blue and green colouring of the stages of life symbolizes the concepts of formal and informal learning. Although these themes continued to evolve, in attempting to find a framework to discuss Inuit perspectives of success as a settler conducting research within an Inuit paradigm, this model provided a helpful foundation to analyze the data.

Once this model was chosen, I identified a number of themes through a process of provisional coding, a process whereby themes are imported from previous research (Saldana, 2009; Vizina 2010). The themes were based on the Inuit Holistic Learning Model (See p. 64) and

include: 1) Success as Walking in Two Worlds; 2) Qallunaat (Eurocentric) Success, 3) Inuit Success, 4) Tensions Between Two Worlds, 5) Success as Reclaiming Inuit Identity, and 6) Success as Balancing Two Worlds. It became clear that Inuit success required a more in depth analysis. I then moved to engage in further exploration of Inuit success based on the realms of knowledge set out by the CCL (2007). I proceeded to re-read conversation transcripts, identifying passages that related to the codes, and then organized the quotes under each realm. These realms include: 1) Success in the realm of People (Family, Elders, and Community); 2) Success in the realm of Culture (Tradition and Language); 3) Success in the realm of Sila (Land and Environment). Through this process, it quickly became clear that this model offered an appropriate means by which to organize data.

As a final note, utilizing these realms was not an attempt to ‘test’ their validity, but rather an opportunity to compare and contrast participant perspectives. Further, the aforementioned CCL report itself calls for the further development and elaboration of the model. This project therefore draws on this spirit of the CCL report. In this case, the CCL’s (2007) realms of knowledge serve as the ‘start list’ (p. 122) for this research. It was important to also consistently employ Saldana’s notion of the ‘reality check’ (2009, p. 122) whereby the researcher is encouraged to continually check in to determine if all provisional codes remain relevant. Upon further development of the analysis section, the literature review was then reviewed to ensure it reflected new data and insights.

Ethical Considerations

The ethics of a non-Indigenous researcher employing an Inuit research framework are complex and outlined in more thorough detail in earlier sections. As these considerations have

been discussed a number of times throughout this thesis, here I focus on the formal ethical considerations as defined by the University of Saskatchewan. To maintain the highest ethical standard, this project was submitted and granted approval by the University of Saskatchewan on March 30, 2015. It was also submitted to and approved by the Nunavut Research Institute. Research did not commence until approvals from these bodies were received. With respect to other ethical safeguards, all data gathered was only accessible to the researcher's supervisor and the participants themselves. All materials, including transcripts, were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home and on a password protected computer. As mentioned above, participants were informed of their rights as research participants, including their right to confidentiality and privacy, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. During the focus group, participants were asked to maintain the confidentiality of their peers by keeping personally identifying information private. Based on the preceding methodology I carried out the interviews and focus group. In the next chapter I will move to introduce the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: INUIT PERSPECTIVES OF SUCCESS & CHALLENGING THE DOMINANCE OF EUROCENTRISM

Introduction

In attempting to analyze and interpret the data, it is important to note the complexity of this subject, and, in particular, that at certain times participants' views aligned, while at others they contradicted each other, and even themselves. This is testament to the proposition that there is no monolithic Inuit perspective, as Inuit communities are heterogeneous, complicated by varied experiences of racism, colonialism, and struggles to preserve language and cultural loss or deterioration. It is also complicated by the historical changes in the North and the specific histories of each of the participants and thus to how each views success. It further speaks to the fact that further research is required on a much larger scale to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary Inuit success.

To structure this section, I will introduce the research participants while providing relevant background information to contextualize their answers. Next, I will explore how participants discussed their definitions of success as being derived from two distinct cultural paradigms. Following this, I will briefly outline these two paradigms, one rooted in Qallunaatut or Western paradigm, and the other rooted in Inuit epistemology. Next, I will discuss how participant's views of success involved a complex balance between Qallunaat and Inuit paradigms, highlighting the requirement to both critically deconstruct the Eurocentric influence on success while strengthening understanding of Inuit cultural success. Finally, I will explore success as balance rooted within contemporary Inuit epistemology by drawing on the Canada Council of Learning's Realms of Knowledge.

Individual Participant Contexts

Before analyzing the data, I first introduce the participants in the study to ensure their

voices are centered within the final thesis. In order to engage in a deeper analysis of the data, it is helpful to understand the contexts from which participants are expressing themselves. Below I provide a brief introduction to each participant by outlining my relationship to them, their initial perspectives of success, and any other unique insight I felt was relevant to the overall arc of the research. The rationale for providing this information is to not only shed light on my relationship with the participants, but to encourage the reader to forge a relationship with the participants themselves.

In total, five individuals were interviewed for this study. Although each of the participants had vastly different life experiences, important similarities may be drawn between them. In introducing the participants, I drew on the information gathered through the interviews but also knowledge accumulated over the course of my relationship with the participants. Additionally, I include narrative excerpts from their interviews to help situate them within the overall discussion of success.

All participants self-identified as Inuit and all were from either the Kivalliq or South Baffin regions in Nunavut. The participants included three women and two men between the ages of 24 and 30 years. All participants were fluent in Inuttitut, although some were more comfortable expressing themselves in their ancestral language than others. All were aware that I had some knowledge of the language but was not fluent. To ensure anonymity, I have assigned each participant a pseudonym. Any potential community and family identifiers were screened out to ensure anonymity.

Tooma

The first participant was Tooma. I met Tooma a number of years ago in a south Baffin community when we worked together on an Inuttitut immersion camp for youth from across the

Baffin region and where Tooma was involved as a facilitator. At that time, we had many after-work conversations about the impact of colonization on Nunavut communities, and, in particular, on the lives of Inuit youth. Tooma is an astute cultural critic and frequently uses his sense of humour and quick wit to reflect on the relationship between Western and Inuit culture in Nunavut. Tooma was an ideal participant because of his relationships with youth and his depth of understanding about how experiences of colonization shape Inuit communities. Tooma was the first participant interviewed during the data gathering stage.

At the outset of our conversations, the dialogue began as a question and answer format and slowly evolved into a conversation. As I already had a previous relationship with Tooma, very little introductory conversation was needed aside from outlining the scope of the project. Tooma was 29 at the time of the interview. He is the middle child of a large family and an even larger extended family. He was raised in his home community and was brought up with strong exposure to traditional values. His understanding of Inuit values is strong, and he is exceptionally bilingual in English and Inuttitut. Typical of many Inuttitut speaking children, Tooma was raised immersed in Inuttitut and learned English in Grade 4 as part of the Nunavut early-exit bilingual language model, where English was established as the only language of instruction. Tooma attended high school in his home community and graduated with relative ease. He attributes this success to the strong support of his family. Despite his proficiency within formal education, more recently Tooma has taken a keen interest in restoring his hunting skills.

Tooma's perspective of success has developed and evolved over the years. To Tooma, as with all the participants, success was a balance of Western and Inuit definitions. Tooma attributed the sources of his perspectives of success as being heavily influenced by his relationship with his family and, in particular, his father. During the interview he stated,

[m]y dad was really strict on our schooling. So we had to do f****ing schooling. Like the only times I have ever seen my father get angry at any of my siblings was when we didn't want to get up for school in the morning and he would drag us out in anger. (Tooma, p. 1-3)

Despite this observation related to his upbringing, Tooma also spoke about what success meant as a young Inuk and identified catching their first seal as one of the primary rites of passage for young Inuit. According to Tooma, “catching your first animal was way more successful to my parents than just finishing school. Like it was always when I caught my first seal, there was my mom and my father and my brothers were all going ahhhhmmmm” (*ibid.*). Tooma went on to say that success was an ongoing balancing act between these two ‘worlds’, a perspective that was repeated with each participant.

After his formal education in high school and attending college in the south, Tooma worked at the high school as a teacher's aid for a number of years. During his time in a teaching role, he was critical of the way Inuit models of success were implemented in formal schooling. When asked about the way education is structured in Nunavut, Tooma highlighted how Qallunaat values dominated within school process and, despite attempts at asserting Inuit values within school, they continue to exist within a framework of Western epistemology. Tooma spoke about the impact of the dominating Qallunaat values in schools, saying it resulted in “a lot of confusion.” As he stated, “[w]hen they go home they have completely different humanistic values and they go to school and it is 9–4 every single day and the majority of your day is spent in a place where different values are taught. Different expectations are taught” (Tooma, p. 8).

Since the time of interview, Tooma has moved from a small community in the Baffin region to a small town in the South, but he spoke occasionally about being homesick for his

family and being out on the land. He continues to attempt to find a balance between two competing notions of success and notes that this negotiation will continue for the rest of his life.

Leetia

Leetia was the second participant in the research. I met Leetia many years ago as we attended high school together. She is younger than I am, and although we knew each other, it was only in recent years that we became better acquainted. Leetia became interested in the research when I first went away to pursue my master's degree and she inquired what I was studying. After explaining the research and seeing her keen interest, I asked if she would participate and she enthusiastically agreed. Leetia is the only participant to spend most of her life in Iqaluit, the capital city that has a very unique position within the colonial discourses that exist in Nunavut. She is a strong personality and a passionate advocate for Inuit rights. She also has a young child to whom she is very dedicated to raising bilingually and biculturally. Based on these factors, Leetia had valuable insights to share regarding her perspectives of success.

As the interview with Leetia was the second of the project, the tone was more relaxed and conversational than the interview with Tooma. The interview took place at Leetia's home and lasted approximately one hour. Similar to Tooma, the prior existing relationship between Leetia and I allowed for a comfortable atmosphere for conversation. At the time of the interview, Leetia was 26. Leetia has a fiery, engaged personality and spoke passionately about changes she would like to see within the formal education system in Nunavut. She was born and raised in Iqaluit and adopted within her extended family. She was raised between her adopted parents and her biological grandmother. She had a very typical Iqaluit upbringing with a large extended family. Leetia completed all of her schooling in Iqaluit and was critical of the Eurocentric roots of her high school experience. As she stated, "[i]n high school, I always felt stuck or lost maybe, just

not right. It's always been English, English, English! It's always been that formula. English educational setting is always been like that. I don't feel like it has been any different" (Leetia, p, 8). She always felt the urge to engage with a cultural education and realized from an early age that Qallunaat education had a position of superiority.

Similar to Tooma, Leetia's perspective of success involved the negotiation between two distinct worldviews. She succinctly expressed her definition of success as, "not having to choose between or not having to feel trapped between being successful in the Inuk way or having to be successful in the Qallunattitut way" (Leetia, p. 1). An important aspect of Leetia's perspective of success involved Inuttitut language proficiency. She was very passionate about her child being fluent in the language and the impact that would have on her child's relationship with her grandmother. She states, "[i]n Inuttitut there are things I can share with my grandmother that I can't share with [my child] if I were only able ... in English so there is a lost connection there" (Leetia, p. 3). Ensuring her child was able to establish and nurture a relationship with Leetia's grandmother is one of the primary motivations behind her dedication to raising her child with knowledge of Inuit culture and language, while also pushing for systemic change in terms of how Inuit cultural education is valued in formal education.

While acknowledging the importance of Inuit culture and values, Leetia is also motivated to have her child raised with the opportunity to participate in both her Qallunaat and Inuk cultures. She stated:

I want her to know where she comes from. I want her to know that she is Inuk and I want her to feel proud of that. But she's not only Inuk; she is white too. Because I am part white and part Inuk and so is her father. So I want her to grow up knowing what it is to be Inuk and be comfortable being Inuk bi-racially and Qallunaat (Leetia, p. 5).

Again reflecting the theme of balance, Leetia felt that working to achieve this balance is one of the most difficult things she faces as a parent.

Leetia currently works for an organization responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Leetia likes her job as she sees it as a space where there is potential to pursue a balanced notion of success. She stated that her job enables her to enact Inuk values and speak Inuttitut regularly. Despite these opportunities, she acknowledged that English and Qallunaat cultural practices continue to dominate in the workplace.

Sheepa

Sheepa was the third participant in the study. Sheepa and I met late in high school and we have known each other for many years since. Sheepa is older than me, so we were not particularly close but shared many mutual friends. Sheepa is of mixed Inuk and Qallunaat heritage and expressed a desire to re-establish cultural education in her life after spending time outside of Nunavut, which she attributed as adding uniqueness to her perspective. Sheepa also worked with a number of youth organizations, affording her unique insight into the challenges Inuit youth face with negotiating Inuit and Qallunaat epistemologies. For these reasons, Sheepa provided an important perspective within the overall scope of the research.

Sheepa was 26 at the time of the interview, which took place in an empty classroom at Sheepa's college. Sheepa engaged in conversation in a calm and soft tone, taking her time to answer each question. The interview lasted about 50 minutes, including the time it took to introduce the research. Sheepa was raised in a small community and spent the early part of her life heavily immersed in Inuit culture and language. Before she started school, Sheepa moved from her community to an English community to establish a relationship with her father's Qallunaat side of the family. When she returned to her home community in Nunavut, Sheepa felt

a strong desire to re-establish and nurture her cultural education. She relearned the language skills that she had lost and was immersed in her mother's side of the family. Concurrent with her cultural education, Sheepa stated that in her home there was always a strong emphasis placed on achieving success in formal education. She spoke about the family expectations for her to finish high school and pursue post-secondary education.

Sheepa's definition of success again involved balance. To express her perspective of success, Sheepa provided an Inuttitut metaphor based on a teaching from an Elder she worked with. To her, success was a form of negotiation based on the terms 'makimaniq' and 'qaggimanik'. She elaborated on the meaning of these terms, stating:

Makimaniq are those aspects of how we be ourselves and how we live our life, giving to others, what makes us healthy, treating others well, and Qaggimanik is how we live our life pursuing material things, not material things, but like having a job, and you know.

Makimaniq is the more emotional holistic idea of a person and qagimaniq is how we pursue material ideas. (Sheepa, p. 2)

This metaphor was revisited a number of times throughout the conversation and represents an important contribution to her understanding of success within the constructs of Inuttitut language.

In the face of her own pursuit of balance, Sheepa felt that schools were indeed a space where limited cultural education can take place, but she acknowledged that they do exist within the structure of a dominant Western approach to education and success. When asked about the academic and cultural structure of her high school, she replied that it was, "often English centered, however, in different settings Inuttitut was the main language. We had a very strong Inuttitut program in our school, and because I was a girl, I was in sewing, all in Inuttitut"

(Sheepa, p. 3). In this way Sheepa acknowledged the possibility of Inuit values being in largely Western-based settings, yet she was quick to point out that her situation was exceptional, and that these instances of Inuit learning from language and values were situated within a system dominated by Qallunaat epistemologies.

Currently, Sheepa is one year away from completing a post-secondary program. She consciously makes time to nurture her relationship to the land and strives for a balanced approach to success. Sheepa is also looking forward to working towards strengthening Inuit ways of educating within the formal education process. In this way, she acknowledges the inferior position Inuit knowledge presently holds within the colonial school system and is passionate about working to ameliorate this.

Elisapee

The fourth interview was with Elisapee, who is from a small community in the Kivalliq region. Currently Elisapee lives and works in Iqaluit. She also recently completed an undergraduate degree in Ottawa. Elisapee has two children, one she communicates with in English and the other in Inuttitut. I first met Elisapee when she attended Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa. Since then, however, we have developed a closer relationship, as we were both Nunavummiut (people from Nunavut) pursuing post-secondary education. We found common ground in the struggles associated with pursuing education away from home. I had spoken with her about this in the early stages of my graduate program, and we had initial conversations about the challenges of balancing divergent definitions of success. Elisapee's experience of completing all of her schooling in the Kivalliq region, maintaining a close relationship with her community, along with her struggles to achieve success on Qallunaat terms, added depth to research sample. Furthermore, Elisapee's strong understanding of the challenges of success made her an ideal

candidate to take part in the research.

At the time of interview, Elisapee was 25. As this was the 4th interview, by then I had figured out how to build a more relaxed conversation around the topic. This interview took place at Elisapee's office but had to be cut short as she had an unexpected engagement during our visit. Elisapee is the oldest of a large family and is mixed of Qallunaat and Inuk descent. Elisapee's first language is Inuttitut and she was raised bilingually with English being the main spoken language at home. Elisapee maintains a very strong relationship with her grandmother, who she called 'Granny', and frequently returns to her community to nurture that relationship. Elisapee spoke about how being away from her family and community continues to elicit feelings that she should return home to further nurture her relationship with her grandmother, and, in doing so, further her cultural education. Elisapee self-identifies as having a strong understanding of Inuttitut, but is less confident speaking in unfamiliar situations. She is passionate about increasing her confidence to speak with greater comfort.

From the outset of the interview, Elisapee was quick to point out the two differing ways of defining success in her life. Similar to other participants, Elisapee spoke of her attempts to negotiate the two different definitions. She spoke about how she viewed success:

Trying to find a balance between both...I've gone onto post-secondary school and almost done this degree. On one hand that is a personal success, but I wouldn't go around saying I'm successful or feeling that way because it's only one way of looking at it... so for me [success] would be being able to do that but also to be able to make time to learn more from my granny and learn how to make kamiik (traditional footwear) or comfortably go out on the land without being afraid. (Elisapee, p. 3)

Elisapee spoke at length about the struggle to find balance in her life and how it continues to be

an ongoing negotiation. Elisapee was hopeful about the impact of including more Inuit in all educational processes. She stated, “[i]f Inuit perspectives or Elder perspectives were actually, meaningfully taken into account in the school systems rather than treated something completely different that doesn’t fit in, then that would help or at least [help] people that can find the balance” (Elisapee, p, 6).

Qajaq

The final participant in the research was Qajaq, with whom I went to high school in Iqaluit. We were close friends, but we were streamed into separate classes during our later years. As a result, we lost touch with each other. This segregation in high school was characteristic of a number of my relationships with my Inuit friends. Qajaq was one of the first students to attend the Piqqusilirivvik Inuit Cultural Learning Facility and also worked as a student support assistant at the high school in Iqaluit after graduation. Qajaq is also an artist who prioritizes Inuttitut in his performances and is actively involved in youth sports. He is an outspoken advocate for suicide prevention and uses art as a method of exploring his position within the colonial context in Nunavut. Qajaq’s upbringing in a number of different Nunavut communities exposed him to a wide range of experiences and opportunities to develop a unique understanding of success as place-based. For these reasons, I approached Qajaq and invited him to take part in the research.

Qajaq was very clear that proficiency in English was a major contributing factor to being successful. At the outset of the interview, he explained, “[m]y aunts from a very young age told me that it was very important for me to be able to speak, read, and write English, just as important as it was for me to speak, read, and write Inuttitut” (Qajaq, p. 2). Qajaq was raised in a small Kivalliq community and split his teenage years between communities in the West and East of Nunavut. Throughout his early childhood, Qajaq moved from a small community to a large

center. It was because of this move that Qajaq first noticed the differences in educational priorities between small towns and larger cities. He stated:

Soon as I hit grade 3 with my family when we moved from [my home community] to Iqaluit, success instantly took 180 degree turn, and now it's no longer how good of a hunter I can become, or how much time I spend on the land, or how many skidoos I can accumulate outside in my garage, it was now how many plaques are on my wall, how many universities have gone to prove to the fact that I am now educated more than the next person (Qajaq, p. 4).

In this way, Qajaq's perspective shed light on success as being place-based. During the interview, he repeatedly made reference to how expectations varied depending on the community he was in. In explaining his view of success as place-based, Qajaq expressed that at one point he moved back to his home community to immerse himself in his cultural education which he continued through enrolling in Piqqusilirivvik Cultural School in Clyde River. While at the school, Qajaq was immersed in Inuttitut and the curriculum was based around learning Inuit cultural practices. His experience at Piqqusilirivvik helped shape his perspective of success.

Qajaq's relationship with his three-year old child also provides insight into the way he views success. He expressed his passion for parenting, stating:

My term of success is always a balance of both where I put huge emphasis not only on myself but my children to learn English. I read to them in English and I read to them going to sleep in English and my last book is always Inuttitut and then we do our ii pii tii giis (Inuttitut alphabet) and that's the last thing she does so that the last thing on her mind is Inuttitut. (Qajaq, p. 16)

Analysis

Over the course of the research, it became increasingly clear that participants' views of the term 'success' was imbued with a range of complex meanings. Participants expressed that success was contextual and varied based on various relationships they had in and out of school and home. Furthermore, it was both individually defined and community-based, and often fluctuated or changed over time. It is also necessary to emphasize that each participant's perspective was highly personal. Each was adamant about speaking from their experience and perspective, and cautioned about imposing their perspective onto others (Sheepa, p. 6; Tooma, p. 3; Elisapee, p.1). With that said, participants also spoke in more general terms of how they viewed success at a societal level.

Acknowledging the personal nature of the foregoing perspectives is critical when attempting to extrapolate more generalized theory. Ultimately, participants spoke about success as a 'balance' between two distinct cultural paradigms. It is pertinent to note that the term 'balance' itself is a term loaded with meaning. To be clear, 'balance' was not something easily achieved but required deep reflection and action on both a personal, and communal level. Furthermore, to achieve a balance within the context of two distinct worldviews required not only an intense negotiation of heavily entrenched colonial dynamics but also an ongoing analysis, and dedication to understanding and dismantling the position of power held by Qallunaatut definitions of success. In this way, before moving to discuss the nuances of participants' views of what this complex notion of balanced success meant, it is necessary to first establish understanding of the various aspects that make up this balance.

Throughout this section I have quoted participants extensively. I provide minimal commentary and interpretation while trying to ensure sufficient space for the participants to be

the primary voices in shaping the overall picture of what success means to them. Despite this, I attempt to draw connections between the comments contained herein in order to convey the overarching themes drawn from the interviews. In the following section, I share how participants discussed success as a multi-faceted concept in their lives.

Success as Walking in Two Worlds

Although participants emphasized the personal nature of their perspectives of success, all participants spoke about success in their lives as being characterized by ‘two worlds’. While not all participants explicitly used the ‘two world’ terminology, all agreed that these worlds were distinct from one another. Elisapee spoke directly to this distinction in stating:

It’s funny when people say “so and so as a young successful person blah blah,” but when I hear that I can’t help but wonder in what way they mean, because to me there are two different ways of viewing success. (Elisapee, p. 1)

These two worlds were talked about in terms of cultural paradigms, one rooted in IQ, and the other rooted in a Qallunaatut paradigm. Although on occasion participants encountered difficulties expressing how these worlds differed, for the most part they were able to clearly distinguish between the two. Elisapee elaborated on the nature of the two worlds she experienced:

I don’t know how to describe it, but there’s two different ways. It’s like an academic written way of being successful and then there’s an Inuttitut traditional knowledge way of going about it and they’re kind of two completely different things. It’s like you have to choose one way or the other. People view it differently so some people might think a person that graduates from high school and university is super successful but another person might think “oh that’s in the Qallunaattitut way, what good does that do for you up

here?” and then vice versa with people who don’t go on to school and other people view them as not successful because they don’t. (Elisapee, p. 1)

All participants agreed that this distinction was reflective of their reality and felt required to engage with both. All participants also shared insight with respect to the impact competing definitions of success have on other young Inuit. As Qajaq stated in this regard:

They’re two different worlds. I kind of feel like I was ripped off a little bit, you know, to be teaching kids in order to do well in the future you have to do this, but it doesn’t leave room for an important part of your own identity and people just feel lost because you have to pursue that on your own terms and your own time because there’s no room for that in school. They won’t even go there, especially if the teachers are Qallunaat (non-Inuit), they don’t understand either right? (Qajaq, p. 4)

In elaborating on how the two paradigms were distinct from one another, some of the participants spoke to how their perspectives of success evolved over the years. They also identified a number of factors that influenced this evolution, including family, place, and cultural values. Qajaq spoke to the numerous points of influence in stating:

Coming from [my home community] being born in such a huge family my initial ideas of success were family oriented. A lot of them were is your freezer full of the right meat? Are your children wearing the right clothing? Are they wearing proper clothing in winter when they are out on the land? Are they teaching him the right thing so that they are capable of hunting out on the land and taking care of themselves? (Qajaq, p. 2)

In this way, all participants viewed success as being characterized by two different worlds, each rooted in a distinct cultural paradigm. Participants also shared deep insight into the complicated web of influences that shaped their perspectives. Participants went on to share a number of

defining characteristics of each distinct ‘world’, along with how they moved to negotiate the two.

Qallunaatut (Eurocentric) Success

All participants were able to elaborate on how they viewed the Western rooted concept of success. As mentioned above, the term *Qallunaatut* is used as synonymous with the concept of ‘Western’. The Inuttitut term can be broken down into two sections: ‘Qallunaat’ – white person, and the affix ‘-tut’, which can be translated as the plural form of ‘to do in the manner of’. In this way the Inuttitut term can be translated as ‘to do in the style of white people/culture’. While it is important to acknowledge the implicit challenges in translating any term between languages, consultations with Inuttitut language specialists confirmed that the term ‘Qallunaatut’ is highly relevant to this context. In relating the term to the research at hand, participants identified a number of defining characteristics, including the ability to secure employment, attainment of formal education, fluency in English, and the acquisition of material items, while continuing to maintain Qallunaatut’s distinct nature from that of Inuit success. As Leetia stated:

In Qallunaat world, joining the workforce like you go off to school you take part in the economy. You just go you go to work that's enough. You get money to pay your bills you work to live and you live to work ... It is a certain way of doing it but different from the Inuk way. (Leetia, p. 9)

Qallunaatut success was also marked by the ability to speak and function in English. Some participants viewed learning English as a symbol of the larger system of learning Qallunaatut values. All participants identified learning English as a pillar of Western rooted success. Qajaq spoke directly to the importance of English in stating:

I know my aunts from a very young age told me that it was very important for me to be able to speak, read, and write English just as important as a it was for me to speak, read,

and write Inuttitut. (Qajaq, p. 2)

Part of the perceived importance of English was tied to the idea that it would lead to further opportunities. Qajaq continues:

I commend a lot of English like it is a very hard thing for me to do but I also understand how easy it's made my life so much easier it has made me to decide what I want to learn as a human being where I was if I was just taught Inuttitut I would almost have a natural guard up against everything that happens outside of Nunavut. (Qajaq, p. 15)

Existing and being able to function within a Qallunaat world was seen by all participants as a necessary negotiation to make in order to succeed in modern contexts. There was an overall acknowledgement that achieving success according to certain aspects of a Qallunaat definitions played a major role in determining the life paths of participants. There was further consensus that a fundamental characteristic of Qallunaatut success was the position of power it held within formal education systems. Participants expressed reservation and frustration when discussing this power relationship that effectively positioned Inuit success as inferior. It became clear that despite the acknowledged role of Qallunaatut definitions of success, participants were highly critical of the position of power it held within society, and passionate about moving to ameliorate it.

Inuit Success

In contrast to Qallunaatut success, participants recognized Inuit success as an important and culturally distinct influence on their lives. In their attempts to delineate Inuit success, participants identified a number of characteristics, including cultural practices, values and beliefs, and Inuttitut language as some defining characteristics. All participants highlighted important cultural considerations to acknowledge when discussing the English term '*success*'.

Tooma spoke of the cultural differences and linguistic limitations in thinking about Inuit success, stating:

Inuit success—it's not something that is told. It's not something that people just tell you, that you are being successful or that you are being a good Inuk now and you are all grown up kind of thing. It is always very low key that kind of mmmmm. That to me was an indication of success more than anything. (Tooma, p. 1)

When asked how Inuit success might be defined, most participants stated that it was difficult if not impossible to translate directly (Leetia, Tooma). Tooma likened success in Inuttitut to the term *silatujuq*, and its antonym *silaituq*, which involve the ability to 'understand the world'.

Tooma elaborated:

There is that word 'silaituq'. When you literally translate it, it means you don't understand the world very well. It can be related to success and can be applicable to not only to kids but even to adults like me. ... you'll notice kids that are *silatujuq* out on the land are usually *silaituq* in the school environment because they spend more time out on the land and I think they have been complimented more in Inuit way. They respond to it much better than they do to the education of *silatujuq*. (Tooma, p. 4)

Tooma's terms *silatujuq* and *silaituq* also reinforce the 'two world concept' in that students can 'understand' one world (on the land) while struggling to understand the other (in the classroom). Both the above quotations are important to consider in appropriately framing a conversation of success within an Inuit cultural context. While participants were quick to highlight these considerations, all agreed that despite these issues, it was still possible to explore how the English term 'success' could be considered in an Inuit cultural context.

A number of important aspects of Inuit culture were identified as contributing to the web

of Inuit success, including Inuttitut language (Leetia, p. 9), cultural practices such as hunting and sewing (Elisapee, p.2; Qajaq, p. 17), family and community relationships (Qajaq, p. 17; Tooma, p. 6), and relationships to the land (Elisapee, p. 1; Qajaq, p. 12). There was sense that all of these specific cultural activities were a crucial means of achieving critical aspects of Inuit success: the passing on of Inuit values. Tooma spoke to the deep importance of embodying and acting on these values as relating to Inuit notions of success:

It's more values; like I think how Inuit measure success is having good values. Being a nice person, being considerate of others and being just able to help... I have gotten a lot of compliments especially in Pang because they always said, 'you always try and help us out and give us a call when something comes up'. It's just very simple. You just pay attention to people's' needs. I think that is a big thing. (Tooma, p. 3)

In addition to conversations of values, participants identified a number of significant cultural practices that were inextricably linked to the transmission of values. These cultural practices include: child rearing, conflict resolution, language transmission, nurturing family/community relations, community governance, and community ceremonies, to name a few. Although a number of practices were identified, two particular activities emerged as effective examples of the relationship between cultural practices and the passing on of Inuit values —hunting and sewing. At this point it is again important to reiterate that hunting and sewing were only two of the numerous and varied Inuit cultural practices that contributed to participant identities.

Participants acknowledged that Inuit culture is highly complex and were aware of the reductionist tendencies when engaging in discussions of cultural practices. Nonetheless, hunting and sewing were clear examples that facilitated conversations about larger cultural processes at play. While acknowledging the deep complexity of Inuit cultural practices and their relationship

to success, in the following section I focus on the relationship between Inuit success and hunting and sewing.

Both female and male participants agreed that for men, success was linked to hunting, and for women, sewing played an important role in Inuit success. Qajaq observed that success within his family involved him moving back to his home community and becoming a hunter (Qajaq, p. 17). Likewise, Elisapee spoke about what success means from an Inuk woman's perspective:

Learning how to make a parka. Especially as an Inuk woman and from [my region], from my community it's kind of like it's just expected among my family, you're expected to be able to learn how to sew for your family and then for a future family ... my granny and all my aunts, they're very good seamstress' and it's just a general expectation that I knew would always come someday and so that one thing alone like, never mind even making other things but learning to make a parka, that's a symbol of an Inuk woman. (Elisapee, p.2)

Importantly, it was not simply the act of carrying out these cultural practices that led to success, but rather an ability to retain and enact the strong sense of Inuit values that they instilled such as nurturing family relations, acquiring language, and enacting communal values through making clothing for family and community members. All participants spoke about the deeper relationship of Inuit knowledge practices as a means to attain the important values that they carry with them. For example, as Qajaq noted:

It's not just learning to build a qamutiik (traditional sled), its learning what the qamutiik means to your family to your community, what is its use in the world, it's not just an isolated thing. It's part of life and learning those things and the values around that I think is an important part of it (Qajaq, p. 14).

Throughout the interview process, participants were adamant that a culturally rooted understanding of Inuit success indeed existed and held strong influence over participants' visions of success. Furthermore, the defining characteristics of success rooted in an Inuit paradigm are numerous. Those characteristics stated above are only a few of the important features that were identified by participants during the limited period of the interview. In this way, there is room to elaborate on Inuit success in subsequent research. With that in mind, participants provided an important point of departure for a discussion exploring success as rooted in both Inuit and Qallunaatut paradigms while also providing insight into the number of tensions that exist between them.

Tensions Between Two Worlds

“The dream of speaking Inuttitut exists in a lot of kids eyes these days that are growing up in the modern society. But the ability to do so does not.”

(Qajaq, p. 14)

In each interview, after identifying two distinct worlds of success, participants moved to highlight a number of tensions between them. While participants acknowledged situations in which these paradigms could co-exist, they felt that, in the majority of contexts, the Qallunaatut paradigm held a position of power. For the purpose of this research, focus was placed on the relationship between Inuit and Qallunaat success within formal education processes. Participants identified school as a major site of tension between the two worlds of success where Qallunaatut success held a position of power over Inuit success. Leetia described how her perspective of success is affected by the dominant Qallunaatut paradigm:

See you go through the formal school system from kindergarten to grade 12 and you go off to college or university and you finish that and then you come back and you get a nice

cushy high paying job and you're successful. But nowhere in there as an Inuk will you find you get to be you. There is no room for being Inuk, you have to follow this way and you are successful you graduate from high school you go off to college and university then you come back and that is successfully you come back and work and have kids and have a nice life and that's the dominant idea of success. (Leetia, p. 8)

Participants continued to elaborate on the relationship that formal schooling plays in shaping notions of success. All participants identified school as a major contributor in both shaping success and upholding the dominant position held by Qallunaatut paradigm. Participants provided insight into how this dominant position is upheld through pedagogical approaches within schools:

It's all Qallunaat values. Even when we were trying to teach Inuttitut values we taught it in a Qallunaat value kind of way. We were teaching Inuttitut and Inuit values using English, and it doesn't capture that whole thing right ... No one is going to be able to capture that in English. (Tooma, p. 4)

The impacts of the dominant position of the Qallunaatut paradigm on Inuit cultural education in schools were numerous. Participants pointed out that the Qallunaatut paradigm effectively positions Inuit success as inferior:

There is no valuation of Inuit ideas of success within the schools. There are some additions like spring camp which are awesome, but they are still seen as inferior. English is the dominant. So there needs to be a valuation of the values. (Tooma, p. 9).

Similarly, Leetia noted the following:

They're not teaching us about our history. How did we get to where we are today? Why are we in the situation we are today? Why are we who we are today? That is all skipped. Like

they are skipping important parts. I think it is important to know where you come from and who you are. Being able to take part in your culture. Being a part of it. It is lost. It is not there. You learn to be and take part in another culture that's not yours. You can't help the lost and confused. It's not having that opportunity [that] is confusing. (Leetia, p. 7)

All participants were adamant in stating their views that school was a place where Qallunaatut ideas were privileged. In exploring these issues further, participants discussed their views on the impact that balancing two distinct worlds of success has on Inuit students:

Not knowing where you come from is such an uncomfortable place to be. What an uncomfortable situation to be in. Not having a sense of identity. What a weird place to be. To be in that position and go to school in a foreign language. In a place that is not supportive of who you are, how uncomfortable. When you are feeling uncomfortable you're not happy right. Like it's not the best learning environment (Leetia, p. 7).

Participants drew connections between the dominant position of Qallunaatut paradigm within formal education and Inuit engagement within schools. For example, Elisapee shared her perspective on the impact of Qallunaatut rooted education and attendance rates:

That's part of the reason why people don't want to go to school. They feel like it doesn't benefit them. If they're not learning things that the community or the family thinks that they should learn or they themselves feel they should learn then why bother, like they don't plan on going to university so why bother, why do they need to learn, read and write all these things in English and feel stupid or incompetent or inadequate. I think that's definitely a problem (Elisapee, p. 4).

Participants expressed that they felt formal school required them to 'choose' between two models of success. This in turn resulted in mounting pressure on participants both within school

and also from family and their communities. Qajaq spoke about the family pressure he faced when he was required to negotiate two worlds of success:

My term of success is probably something my grandfather would never ever agree on and it's probably something that I'll have to live with for the rest of my life... [by] not moving to the community I wasn't able to successfully do what he requested of me where I was I'm doing everything that I was initially expected of me from my high school teacher with just going to college and come back and help the community. It's a balance I consider, but I know for a fact in my heart my grandfather's term for success will never change because he's never learned the Qallunaat way of life. (Qajaq, p. 16)

In sum, participants identified a series of tensions between Inuit and Qallunaatut views of success. Participants view Qallunaatut success as holding a dominant position over Inuit success. Formal schooling processes were identified as playing a critical role in the shaping visions of success while upholding Qallunaatut epistemologies position of dominance. In response, participants sought to establish a vision of success that challenged and dismantled the dominant position of Eurocentrism by prioritizing an education that valued Inuit cultural paradigms.

Success as Reclaiming Inuit Identity

A foundational pillar of participants' experience involved the process of engaging with and reclaiming Inuit cultural definitions of success. For the participants, to be successful as an Inuk meant a process of reclaiming Inuit identity. Many shared stories of their experience pursuing Inuit success through various means, both inside and outside of formal schooling. As school was seen as being dominated by Qallunaat success, participants were forced to go to great lengths to fulfill their yearning to engage with Inuit notions of success outside of the school, including the need to travel to their home communities:

I traveled to [my home community] to ‘learn how to be Inuk’ if I can explain that to you. I was raised here in Iqaluit and I went to school here until I was 17, 16 grade 11 but I also knew Inuktiturni qaujimaluanngiqaugama. I knew I was going to have to make a decision at that time in my life if I was going to be a leader for people. I was going to have to comfortably speak my [mother] tongue taikungaugama Inuttitut qaujimaluanngiqaujunga. (Qajaq, p. 4)

Qajaq spoke of the difficulties he encountered when engaging in the process of reclaiming his Inuit success:

The first three weeks I cried realizing how much of my culture I had lost and I was fortunate enough to be young enough that I can get a little bit of it back but so much of it had left me that coming back, the first month I ask myself why? Why am I doing this? I should be in Iqaluit, going to the theater I should be out with my friends you know man we're going to go out and have a beer or go out to a picnic whereas I'm stuck in [my home community] going to a teen dance in front of forty other Inuit who really don't want to speak to me cause I don't know the language but as I told myself and I emphasize to myself in the mirror that this is all for the better. As I got from one month to the second month to the third I started to realize that it was the best decision I've ever made in my life. (Qajaq, p. 9)

In providing insight into this section of the discussion, participants were extremely passionate, and were even brought to tears. Their attempts to find success on Inuit terms were not simple choices they made, but rather them reacting to an education system that privileged Qallunaat knowledge and help Inuit knowledge as inferior, and in many ways absent. This required some participants to go to great lengths to reclaim and honour their identity. Some participants

expressed that often these were intense decisions that often changed the course of their lives. In their efforts to reclaim their Inuit identity, they were required to face both intense histories and the continued legacy of colonization on a very personal level. They had to negotiate a number of forces that were often beyond their control. This lack of control over defining success was often first identified in formal schooling, but had the potential to last beyond school years. Qajaq spoke to the lack of choice in determining one's own vision of success:

Once you get to high school, that choice [of learning Inuttitut] is really removed from you and when you are in elementary school, we have no say in it because you're learning what you are taught by your parents but the urge and I think the dream of speaking Inuttitut exists in a lot of kids eyes these days that are growing up in the modern society. But the ability to do so is not. (Qajaq, p. 14)

Participants identified a number of reasons that education rooted in an Inuit paradigm was so absent within formal schooling, but emphasized that they felt Inuit knowledge is often viewed as less valuable by Qallunaat school administrators within the education system. In response to this issue, participants were quick to acknowledge the critical benefits of having a strong cultural education. Qajaq, for example, spoke to these benefits:

the value of knowing the Inuttitut way of life has lost its appeal. It is still there after you've learned it and been introduced to it and you see the importance of having that understanding ... and you come to understand how amazing and how powerful Inuit knowledge really is. There isn't enough emphasis on getting students and youth through this hump and to realize that there are benefits to knowing Inuit world and Inuit knowledge but they are inside. They are things you build mentally, that give you a solid base to say I can now handle the next obstacle in my life because Inuit always have in the past. (Qajaq,

p. 9)

Despite the perception of little control, participants maintained the notion that Inuit success was important to themselves and others. Participants spoke to the potential impact of increased opportunity to engage in cultural education. All participants agreed that increased engagement with Inuit cultural education held substantial positive impact on young Inuit. Leetia spoke to the positive impact in stating:

It makes you feel good. You have this confidence. I can do this, I can catch a seal, and I can prepare the skin; I can cut out a pattern. There is certain ways of doing things and there are techniques. And you use those and then you have a result. Wow I made this beautiful thing and there is a learning process involved with it. It is also therapeutic, you can sit down with an Elder and you can learn from that Elder, it is passing on knowledge and having conversations about our culture and pass on our culture while doing that activity. It is empowering. (Leetia, p. 6)

Having the opportunity to engage with an education rooted in an Inuit paradigm was seen as important to the development of Inuit identity. Participants identified the formal education system as playing a key role in students' opportunity to engage with cultural education. Although all participants saw potential for formal schooling to provide opportunities for cultural education, there continued to be a severe lack of Inuit cultural education. Leetia spoke directly to this point:

I didn't know when I was going to high school and in elementary and middle school and high school like you don't learn very much about Inuit or where they come from...How did we get to where we are today? Why are we in the situation we are today? Why are we who we are today? Why are we who we are today? Like that's all skipped. Like they are skipping important parts. I think it is important to know where you come from and who

you are. Being able to take part in your culture. Being a part of it. It is lost. It is not there.

You learn to be and take part in another culture that's not yours. You can't help the lost and confused its not having that opportunity is confusing. (Leetia, p. 7)

All participants spoke about the significant potential impact that an education rooted in Inuit notions of success could have had on students. One potential result involved the increased ability to transfer this success to other areas. Similarly, most participants maintained that the ability to establish a strong sense of Inuit identity helped them find success within other levels of formal education. Leetia again spoke to this point:

Studying Inuit history and land claims and all these events that kind of changed how Inuit have gained autonomy within Canada. And I say that I didn't do well but it was a stepping-stone towards me being able to go to university and to being successful in that in the academic realm. (Leetia, p. 4)

In this way, reclamation of Inuit identity played a crucial role in informing overall notions of success for participants. Despite the noted challenge of pursuing Inuit understandings of success in schools, all felt that when cultural education was prioritized that it has a positive impact on students. In sum, participants passionately expressed their desire to establish a more balanced vision of success within their lives. In order to achieve this, a simultaneous critical dismantling of dominant Eurocentric influence, and reclamation of Inuit cultural success within both formal and informal educational processes was needed. In the final section of this chapter, I will elaborate on how participants envisioned a balanced definition of success by prioritizing Inuit success.

Success as a Balancing Two Worlds

In their ongoing attempts to reconcile tensions between Qallunaat and Inuit paradigms,

participants spoke about forging new definitions of success through ongoing negotiation of the two epistemologies. All participants identified the term ‘balance’ in discussing how they viewed success in their lives. Other terms used when discussing success included ‘negotiation,’ ‘combination,’ etc. Regardless of differing terminology, all participants spoke passionately about the importance of negotiating an effective balance between ‘two worlds.’ Furthermore, it was these discussions of a balanced notion of success that ultimately constituted the core finding of this thesis. Accordingly, to begin this section, I provide three extensive quotes from participants that speak directly to the central theme:

You have to be able to hunt and sew, and speak Inuttitut and all that, while fulfilling the Qallunaat way of living. But you have to retain something. You have to be able to I guess have a 9-5 job, and be formally recognized. But also carry on aspects of your culture.

(Leetia, p. 9)

Qajaq spoke to how he viewed success as balance in stating that

Success to me is ... teaching my child how to balance the values that were taught to me until I was 7 in terms of how you appreciate the land, and respect you have not just for other Inuit, but for everybody in the community as a whole but also knowing that I do want that Nissan Titan, I do want that two story house and in order to have that I have to have that high salary. So success to me as a modern Inuk is just as much as having the diploma on the wall, as it is having the caribou in the freezer and not just any caribou. I want to catch that caribou. I want to be participating in that, in my culture. I want to say I knew exactly where these caribou are at a certain point that I can go out tomorrow and I'll be back in 2 days and my objective will be completed just like saying I'm at work for 2 weeks and get my pay so both hand in hand are just as equally important to me. (Qajaq, p. 12)

Elisapee reiterated both Qajaq and Leetia's desire to achieve a 'balanced' success in her life:

I would say trying to find a balance between both. So, like I've gone onto post secondary school and almost done this degree and so on one hand that is a personal success, but I wouldn't go around saying I'm successful or feeling that way because it's only one way of looking at it like, so far for me would be being able to do that but also to be able to make time to like, learn more from my granny and learn how to make kamiik or comfortably go out on the land, without being afraid but, you know just comfortably in general, like there's two different ways of or like, improving my Inuttitut skills like, they're two very distinct separate things and for me being successful is being able to find a balance of the two, to keep like balance, to keep them both even so one does not dominate the other. (Elisapee, p. 1)

All participants were clear in their desire to achieve a balanced notion of success. In elaborating on their views of what this balance might look like, Sheepa viewed this as a holistic approach to success:

I think it's to be a whole person. To be knowledgeable. To be able to provide for family, and for one's self. I think wellbeing is a very large part so mental well being, I think that's a big part of being successful to be able to not only provide with food and shelter but provide guidance, to provide mentorship, to guide other people to live a good life. (Sheepa, p. 2)

Despite the yearning to achieve balanced success, all participants acknowledged that they felt they were forced to *choose* between the two worlds. This choice was the result of the dominant position that Qallunaatut success held within formal schools. In other words, there was a perception that to pursue success on Qallunaat terms meant engagement in school – which often

negated the ability to succeed on Inuit terms. Participants also expressed that they did not wish to choose between one world and the other. Leetia spoke to the desire to not have to choose in stating:

I want to be able to go to school, yeah, but I also want to be able to sew. I want to be able to go hunting. I want to go fishing. I want to be able to prepare country food. I want all to be included in an education system. I think being able to have that gives you the opportunity to succeed in both worlds. Like you can still be Inuk and you can still go off to college or university and you can still be successful but the opportunity or the option to not have to choose between both ... One doesn't trump the other. (Leetia, p. 8)

Furthermore, the desire to not have to choose between two modes of success was explored in a call for a more holistic notion of success that could resist attempts to classify the two worlds:

I want to see them mashed together like I want that to be in the education system and I want it to be part of life and I want and yeah I like that. I think you can be a modern like that. To be able to succeed in both Qallunaat and Inuk...or does there even have to be a Qallunaat and Inuk way can it just be the way? Do we have to label it? (Leetia, p. 8)

While some participants questioned the use of binary terminology, they still held to the belief that achieving balance will require a rethinking of values within formal schooling processes:

It's not Qallunaat ways of knowing or Inuit ways of knowing. It's a collective it's a human thing, we are responsible to ensure that we are able to raise our children to be successful in the world that we live in. We can't favour one over the other and we have to bring back how we as Inuit teach, and our knowledge has to be recognized as being valuable within that system. (Sheepa, p. 7)

In this way, balance was identified as a critical component of participants' notions of success.

While all participants acknowledged the importance of the Qallunaatut paradigm of success within that balance, they all agreed that social processes were firmly in place within formal education to facilitate achieving this cultural notion of success. In the face of Qallunaatut notions of success holding a dominant position within formal schooling, all participants spoke about the important role Inuit success continued to play in their lives. There was consensus that deconstructing the position of power held by Qallunaatut success was the only way to reconcile between the two paradigms. This reconciliation would in turn help young people excel not only in school, but also in life. Participants also agreed that there was substantial work to be done in order to achieve a system to support youth achieving balance. One significant piece of this puzzle involved exploring what precisely a balanced model of success might look like.

Akunninganiinniq Model: Realms of Balanced Success

Participants provided critical insight into the myriad factors that influence how they perceive success. Ultimately, participants stated that a balance between Qallunaatut and Inuit cultural notions of success was critical. At times, participants viewed that they were able to achieve this balance, while in other circumstances they felt that certain notions of success were forced upon them. A central point of this discussion centered on the important role of success within an Inuit cultural context and how this influenced their notions of balance. Despite the desire to establish Inuit cultural success within their lives, participants highlighted the dominant position of Eurocentric success as negatively impacting their ability to achieve any form of balance. In attempting to understand these complex perspectives I moved to create a model to structure the findings of this research. The final section of this chapter outlines the Akunninganiinniq model of success, which I developed based on the experiences and testimony of the research participants.

To guide this section of the analysis, I drew on the Inuit Realms of Knowledge as set out in the Canadian Council of Learning's (2007) document, *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Metis Learning*. The realms were identified and developed through a number of workshops with Inuit educators and academics that sought to establish Aboriginal centered learning models. Identifying realms of knowledge was one component of a larger project geared towards understanding Indigenous learning as distinct from Eurocentric approaches and rooted in a lifelong process. As the 2007 report notes

learning for Aboriginal people is rooted in relationships with the natural world and the world of people (i.e., the self, the family, ancestors, clan, community, nation and other nations) and their experiences with languages, spirituality, traditions and ceremonies...these complex relationships and experiences are represented in all of the Holistic Lifelong Learning Models as Sources and Domains of Knowledge. (p. 18)

The CCL identified three culturally distinct 'holistic lifelong learning models' appropriate to First Nations, Métis and Inuit. The Inuit learning model has three pillars: 1) Learning from the world of people (Family, Elders, and Community; 2) Learning from and about culture (Language and Tradition); and 3) Learning from and about Sila (Land and Environment) (CCL, 2007, p. 21). These 'realms' provide a useful structure to discuss how success might be understood as a balance of Inuit and Qallunaatut cultural contexts. Furthermore, as a non-Indigenous researcher, employing an Inuit-developed model provides a culturally appropriate framework to engage in this discussion and thus minimizes the potential risks of projecting my values through the application of an outside analytical structure.

For the purpose of this study, I modified the wording of the domains of knowledge to create a model based on the term Akunninganiinniq to discuss how research participants viewed

contemporary success as a negotiated balance in Nunavut. As such, I substituted the word ‘success’ for ‘knowledge, and inserted the term Akunninganiinniq based on the overall thesis of this research. The term Akunninganiinniq can be translated as the ‘process of being in between’. I chose this term as I felt it effectively mirrored the desired education system called for by the research participants, which was rooted in the concept of being ‘in a balance between’ Inuit and Western notions of success. While Akunninganiinniq is closely related to the concept of culturally-based education explored by a number of authors (Aylward, 2009; Cajete, 1994), it differs in that it is fundamentally based on the need to critically deconstruct the dominant position of Qallunaat paradigm within educational processes. It does so by acknowledging that if true Akunninganiinniq is ever to be realized, the dominating influence of Qallunaatut paradigm on education in Nunavut must be analyzed, understood, and deconstructed. Without realigning the cultural paradigm that provides the current foundation for formal education in Nunavut, genuine Akunninganiinniq - and challenging the consequences of Eurocentric education - will never be realized.

This resulted in the modified terminology of the ‘Akunninganiinniq Model of Success’. Ultimately, I felt this was an appropriate change as it provided an effective way to present my research findings. Additionally, this model seeks to build on the spirit of the CCL’s (2007) report, and specifically the importance it places on further articulating and understanding what lifelong learning means in Inuit communities (p. 30). In this way, I am hopeful that the Akunninganiinniq Model contributes to a more holistic understanding of Inuit education. As a further introductory note, although this model is helpful, it also has limitations. In particular, cultural knowledge and lived experience cannot be neatly compartmentalized. Many of the participant expressions overlap a number of realms and certain quotations are repeated as they

apply to numerous realms. In short, while this model is not perfect, it does supply an important analytical framework for understanding success as expressed by the participants in this study.

Akunnganiinniq in the realm of ‘People’

The first realm of success identified in the Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model was success in the realm of ‘People’. This realm is further broken down into three categories: Family, Community, and Elders. The CCL report (2007) cites the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in attempting to elucidate the importance of these categories:

Traditional education prepared youth to take up adult responsibilities. Through apprenticeship and teaching by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, skills and knowledge were shaped and honed. In the past, the respective roles of men and women in community life were valued and well established, with continuity from generation to generation, so that youth saw their future roles modeled by adults and elders who were respected and esteemed within their world. (p. 19)

All participants spoke at length about success as it relates to their numerous levels of relationships within the realm of ‘People’. Participants relayed meaning of success as this concerns the retention of cultural values and practices passed down from their parents and grandparents, while understanding the importance of the knowledge they gained in school from teachers. Participants also spoke about the significant challenges they encountered in negotiating a balance between the traditional values of their grandparents and the modern lives they envisioned for their children.

Family

All participants touched on the importance of maintaining and nurturing relationships with family members as key to their success. Family was, in turn, a critical factor with respect to

passing on values, language, and cultural practices such as sewing and hunting. All participants also identified struggles with family relations resulting from attempts to find a balanced view of success. Whether it was going away to school or learning English, family was identified as a major contributing factor shaping notions of success. Furthermore, family had special significance within an Inuit cultural context, as expressed by the following participants:

When I caught my first seal, they made it out to be not just a personal achievement but also everyone's achievement. Like you would help everyone, you helped your little brother catch the seal cause you saw it first, or cause you gave him the nissik or stuff like that. So they make the whole family part of the success and you feel successful because you are part of a whole group. (Tooma, p. 8)

Leetia elaborated on the importance of family through identifying the importance of Inuit naming and kinship relationships:

Being able to raise your family and providing them with being able to know ... these kinship terms, being able to maintain those because those are very strong way of maintaining relationships within the family. Like my baby called my grandmother *amauq* and there's this kinship they have this connection because of that kinship and being able to maintain those kinships within the family I think that's important. If you can maintain that as a family and made us stronger family, when you a stronger family and you can do things as a family when you're strong. It goes hand in hand. (Leetia, p. 10)

One particularly interesting insight came from participants with children. Those with children spoke at length of their desire for their children to be able to achieve balance between Qallunaat and Inuit ways of being. Referring to her child, Leetia stated:

I want her to know where she comes from. I want her to know that she is Inuk and I want

her to feel proud of that. But she's not only Inuk, she is white too. Because I am part white and part Inuk and so is her father. So I want her to grow up knowing what it is to be Inuk and be comfortable being Inuk bi-racially and Qallunaat. But I really want her to know where she came from, know about her history, know how to read and write in Inuttitut, and I want I guess what you can say Inuk beliefs, I want her to have those. But what I struggle with is that I don't want to have to identify all these things like 'Here are my Inuk beliefs and these are my white beliefs.' I just want her to know that they're there. I don't want it to be a choice that you have to have one or the other. (Leetia, p. 6)

Accordingly, family played an important role the way participants spoke about success.

Community

As with the importance of family, participants spoke about the role community plays in shaping their understanding of success. Success within the community involved being viewed as embodying values and contributing to the betterment of the community or being able to go hunt and understand the values of sharing your catch. Qajaq summed this up in stating:

It is the people that I know and how I got there that determine my success and if they see me and they say I am doing good for the community whether it's in Inuttitut or English, but if I am helping to make the change after having gone to my school then they can say I'm doing the right thing and that I'm being successful person. (Qajaq, p. 17)

Participants also spoke of the importance of balancing these community values with being able to leave your community to pursue other opportunities such as education. Tooma elaborated on this theme when he identified the individuals he viewed as successful in his life. Tooma offered one of his family members as an example:

I can honestly say my cousin. He went to [pre-college program] then he went to [college

program] then he got a job with Parks Canada, what he likes doing out on the land, he really likes the office environment as well. That has allowed him to buy boats and snowmobiles and Hondas and trucks. Not only that, he helps out his parents a lot, buying them stuff, and providing them country food. That to me is a modern way of success for Inuit - to be able to take your education for the betterment of your community. (Tooma, p. 6)

While emphasizing the importance of living within and contributing to your home community, all participants identified a balanced notion of success as having the ability to leave the community for various opportunities and eventually ‘coming back’.

Elders

In further exploring the role that ‘people’ play in Inuit success, it is important to acknowledge the specific role that Elders play in informing perspectives of success among participants. The Canada Council of Learning (2007) report elaborates on this key point:

Elders play a key role as facilitators of lifelong learning in Aboriginal communities. They teach about responsibilities and relationships among family and community—reinforcing intergenerational connections and identities. Elders transmit the community’s culture through parables, allegories, lessons and poetry (p. 20).

All participants identified the importance of Inuit success in relation to elders in their communities. Whether it was through language, values, or the ability to create cultural materials, participants all agreed that Elders play an important role in Inuit success:

It's not just being able to make kamiik (traditional boots), but being able to sew from skins and being able to have that connection. When I say connection I mean to my *grandmother* [emphasis added] to the environment to knowing who I am and where I came from.

Knowing how we survived ... Being able to have that I think is a being successful. (Leetia, p. 6)

Participants attribute honouring relationships with Elders as key elements contributing to their notions of success. An additional point of significance in the role Elders play in shaping participants perspectives of success was a perceived pressure in balancing two worlds. In their ongoing attempts to negotiate these two worlds, participants at times felt challenged because participation in formal education virtually negated their ability to fulfill their Elders' notions of success. Qajaq spoke directly to this pressure, stating that his definition of success is not only incongruent with his grandfather's perspective but is something he will continue to struggle to come to terms with for the rest of his life (p. 7). This perspective was echoed within other interviews and whether spoken to directly or not, there was often a sense that participants wished to fulfill their Elder's wishes. In this way a balanced notion of success in relation to Elders is not always easy to achieve.

Akunnganiinniq Success in the Realm of Culture

In discussing Inuit success within the realm of culture, the Canadian Council of Learning (2007) drew on the term Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to facilitate this dialogue. According to the CCL, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit "embraces all aspects of traditional Inuit culture, including values, worldview, language, social organization, knowledge, life skills, perceptions and expectations" (p. 22). Although this definition provides the basis for a larger conversation about all the above-mentioned tenets of what makes up a culture, participants focused on a number of Inuit values that lay the foundation of their notion of Inuit success. Sheepa identified a number of key cultural components that contributed to her vision of success:

Family, spending time doing things that make me feel happy, where I feel at ease, so

spending time with my family at the cabin, or fishing, or sewing, or spending my time doing these things ... those cultural activities that make you feel good because you are honouring everything you have done, everything you have done your whole life, every story you have heard from your grandparents. Like it is just cleaning a skin or cutting up a seal, but it is acting on everything you are and everything you have been taught as a kid (Sheepa, p. 8).

To further explore a discussion of cultural success, the Inuit lifelong learning model broke down the realm of culture into two categories: Tradition and Language.

Tradition

Participants identified cultural practices that are inextricably linked to their ideas of success. As previously noted, hunting and sewing were raised as specific activities that were important sites of transmitting cultural knowledge but there were a number of other aspects of tradition activities for the transmission of cultural knowledge: child rearing, conflict resolution, language transmission, nurturing family/community relations, community governance, and community ceremonies, to name a few. Participants agreed that success for men was linked to hunting, as summarized by the following statement: “The thing is Inuit boys are expected to be really good hunters and stuff like that (Tooma, p.3). Likewise, for woman, traditional Inuit success was often associated with sewing:

Kamiit (traditional Inuit boots) are big part of my life big part of who I am. I own several pairs of kamiik and I have never made a pair I've always wanted to make a pair and I just started the process but never finished. It's something my grandmother does and her mother and her mother. It's just something that goes on and that has gone on for a really long time. It is part of who I am. (Leetia, p. 6)

As mentioned above, engaging in cultural practices such as hunting and sewing were seen as central to Inuit; however, it was not simply the act of catching a seal or sewing a parka that made these significant, but the ability to retain and enact the strong sense of Inuit values that they instilled. Qajaq touched on the deeper meaning of cultural practices as a means to attain the important Inuit values they represent (Qajaq, p. 14). At the same time, participating in cultural practices while learning the associated values in the face of Qallunaat definitions of success was wrought with challenges. Again, participants spoke about their struggles to find balance:

I asked my father the first time when I was a kid. I said, ‘Dad, what do you want me to be when I’m older?’ and he said, ‘If it was my choice, we would live in Arviat and hunt’ and I giggle and I laughed at the thought just what is there in hunting! And now that I look back at it as a 30 year old how amazing that would be to have that opportunity and it goes to show that in terms of two generations how far you can go from determining different views of success. (Qajaq, p. 17)

Language

Akunnganiinniq within the realm of ‘culture’ also involves success within the realm of ‘Language’. The CCL report states that “Aboriginal language and cultural continuity are inextricably connected. Through language, Aboriginal Peoples transmit cultural knowledge from one generation to another and make sense of their shared experience” (p. 25). This was echoed throughout all the interviews as participants identified knowledge of Inuttitut language as a foundational contributing factor to their perspective of success. Leetia spoke about this in stating:

I think language has a major role in measuring success and I don’t necessarily think that is a fair way or the only way to measure success or saying if someone is Inuk but language is a huge way to measure success for an Inuk for Inuit. (Leetia, p. 9)

Leetia reinforced the importance of Inuktitut language literacy as further contributing to her definition of success:

Being able to read and write in Inuktitut is really important and I take pride in it because it's a connection to my grandmother, my grandfather, and if I can read and write in Inuktitut there are things I can share with my grandmother that I can't share with her if I were only able to read and write in English. So there is a lost connection there. (Leetia, p. 4)

Although Inuktitut was seen as an important tenet of Inuit success, all participants acknowledged the importance of bilingualism as a facet of balanced success:

My term of success is always a balance of both where I put huge emphasis not only on myself but my children to learn English. I read to them in English and I read to them going to sleep in English and my last book is always Inuktitut and then we do our ii pii tii giis (Inuktitut alphabet) and that's the last thing she does so that the last thing on her mind is Inuktitut. And the first things we say to her and you know in the morning are Inuktitut so that we emphasize that very much. (Qajaq, p. 16)

This dedication to bilingualism was stressed within all the interviews. Participants equally felt that the mechanisms to learn English were firmly in place, but felt that more support was needed for learning the Inuktitut language. In this way, balance within the realm of language involved ensuring that bilingual education was prioritized. Participants spoke passionately about how achieving this balance within the realm of language would lay an important base for students to achieve balance within other realms.

Akunninganiinniq Success in the realm of Natural World

The Canada Council of Learning identifies 'the realm of the Natural World' as the final

realm of success. In particular, although the CCL breaks down the ‘Natural World’ into two sub-realms: Environment and Land. Success within the Natural World contributed significantly to participant perspectives. All participants spoke about the importance of trying to maintain a relationship to the land, how shifting environments influenced their notions of success, and how they often struggled to achieve balance between various environments.

Environment

Participants spoke about how their views of success would change depending on which community or learning environment they were in. This was expressed through the idea that when they were active in their home community, their perspective of success would be more in line with traditional Inuit values. In contrast, when they were away at school or in Iqaluit to pursue employment, their perspectives on success would subscribe to more Qallunaatut values. Tooma, for example, spoke to the impact his environment had on his changing perspectives of success:

My level of how I feel successful in Iqaluit is very different than how I feel successful in Pang. Even your environment completely changes that. Because in Pang my level of success is being able to be out on the land with my friends ... I always feel like I am actually really out hunting and providing for someone. But when I come to Iqaluit my mind completely changes and I just want to make more money than anything. (Tooma, p.

5)

As mentioned in previous sections of this paper, participants also identified how the formal school environment was highly influential in shaping their notions of success. An important discussion involved trying to determine ways to modify the formal schooling environment, dominated by Qallunaatut values, to subscribe to a more balanced environment. One example of a learning environment that achieved this balance was Nunavut Sivuniksavut, a pre-college

program in Ottawa. Most participants had experience with NS with 4 graduating and one exiting early. They all agreed that NS was successful in creating a learning environment that balanced both Inuit values and Qallunaatut values. Leetia elaborated on how NS achieves this balance:

[T]hey teach you about Inuit history and teach you about the land claims and in a formal setting where you have the opportunity to be Inuk and to be able to decide how you wanna move forward with what you learn like how you're going to move forward and what you're going to do given that you know where you come from and you learn than in a formal education setting I think that is where it exists (Leetia, p. 5).

Providing NS as an example of a balanced learning environment is significant in that it proves that these learning spaces already exist. This is a critical finding in that it distances this discussion from theory and provides real examples of achieving the balance the research participants' desire.

Land

The land had a major role in how participants viewed success. All participants maintained a relationship to the land and most expressed a strong desire to nurture this relationship. Cultural activities like hunting and sewing – along with their intrinsic values – were inextricably linked to the land and were all activities participants were actively engaged in. Despite this, participants expressed how achieving balance involved nurturing the pre-existing relationship with the land and increasing their engagement in land-based activities. Developing an active critique of Qallunaatut influence on success was seen as a necessary achievement. Participants spoke about how they wanted to ensure their children established and nurtured relationships to the land. For example, Qajaq spoke to the importance of passing on these values to his child:

Success to me is having an Inuk wife, having an Inuk child, teaching my child how to

balance the values that were taught to me until I was 7 in terms of how you appreciate the *land* [emphasis added]. (Qajaq, p. 11)

In addition, all participants agreed that formal school needed to play a larger role in facilitating relationships to the land among youth. Tooma spoke about the potential role schools could play in helping to nurture this relationship:

I think whenever the school hears someone caught his first seal the school should celebrate with that student. It doesn't matter how embarrassing it might be to the student but when you get older you start realizing oh shit, I was part of my school celebrated with me. But when it comes to actually catching that seal I think it is a personal thing. But celebrating that catch the school can help. (Tooma, p. 12)

The central importance of hunting and catching one's first seal has been illustrated at certain points throughout this thesis. Tooma is suggesting that having this highly significant cultural moment celebrated within schools would contribute to a more balanced learning environment, and would also encourage young people to nurture their relationship to the land. Tooma continued to explore the idea that schools could potentially give credit for successfully learning how to hunt seals.

In addition to more 'traditional' activities such as hunting seal, some participants spoke to how learning about the land within a colonial context would be an important component of balance. Leetia expressed this in stating, "Studying Inuit history and *land claims* and all these events that kind of changed how Inuit have gained autonomy within Canada" (Leetia, p. 4). In this way the land was not only seen within more traditional activities but understanding how relationships to the land have shifted over time and within a colonial context was also an important aspect of achieving balance.

In sum, success in the realm of Nature involved finding a balance between learning environments (the land and the classroom), teachers and elders/knowledge holders, while ensuring that relationships to traditional lands continued to play an important role in shaping participants' perspectives of success. Participants provided a number of concrete examples of how formal schooling could play a more active role in helping students achieve a balanced notion of success within the realm of the Natural World. Some examples included questioning education based indoors within the confines of a 'classroom', restructuring pedagogical approaches to follow the changing seasons (Tooma, p 12), more Inuit in schools (Leetia, p. 8), and more cultural immersion for teachers (Qajaq, p. 6).

Summary

Participants in this study provided insightful perspectives into how they define success in their lives. At the outset of this chapter, I provided important participant background information to help contextualize the data. Through a mix of individual interviews and a 'country food' focus group, data was gathered and analyzed. Through this analysis, it is possible to conclude that participants viewed success as a balance between Qallunaat and Inuit notions of success. Integrating this conclusion into theory, I adapted the Holistic Learning Model to the 'Akunninganiinniq Model of Success' in order to both organize and explore Inuit notions of success. Through this, a number of tensions and challenges were identified in participants' experiences in trying to achieve balance. One key aspect of achieving a healthy balance was the need to support and provide opportunities for young people to reclaim and engage with their Inuit identities. I return to this point in the fifth and final chapter where I elaborate on the Akunninganiinniq Model of success along with a number of critical processes that need to take place to realize the model within formal schooling in Nunavut.

CHAPTER 5: THE NORTHERN EXPERIENCE: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Discussion, Recommendations and Future Directions

I began this study to explore how former Inuit high school students in the North perceived their own success. The relationship between success and Indigenous education is a growing area of academic study explored by a number of authors (Bazylak, 2002; Canada Council of Learning, 2007, 2009; Claypool 2013, Moon 2014). Despite the range of studies that explore success among Aboriginal youth, very little has been specifically focused on the perceptions of success from lenses different from conventional employment and market value. The conventional perception of success - based on the importance of skill building leading to high school completion and eventually to employment- make up the dominant notion of success. As such, these values have assumed a position of dominance that informs educational philosophy in Nunavut (Aylward, 2010; Berger, 2006; Berger, 2009). In exploring this issue within an Inuit cultural context, notions of success become increasingly complicated. As this study found, although success for the former students who participated in this research did partially subscribe to dominant Eurocentric definitions of success as belonging to formal education leading to employment, participants also spoke of the fundamental role of Inuit land, language and culture in framing their own definitions of success. Moreover, amongst all participants there was strong desire to ameliorate and challenge the dominant position of Eurocentric education. It is within this web of relationships that this research is situated.

To carry out this research, I interviewed five Inuit former high school students, all of whom had graduated from high school. Participants were required to be Inuk, have attended school in Nunavut, and currently live in the North. I had had a prior relationship with all the participants, established either through going to school together or engaging in community life.

This was a significant aspect of the study as it allowed interviews to take place on a pre-established relationship of trust. All participants had previously expressed an interest in critically examining education in Nunavut. Interviews focused on the main research question: How do former Inuit high school students define success? Research took place in Iqaluit, with participants coming from five different communities across Nunavut. Although I anticipated a certain level of complexity when analyzing perspectives of success, I was initially unaware at how nuanced a discussion of success would prove to be. As the process unfolded, I quickly became aware of the complex lives and experiences of each participant. Accordingly, I realized that the path forward would not necessarily take the route I had initially envisioned.

As mentioned above, what success means to Indigenous students is an emerging area of research. Within the dominant Canadian national discourse, success continues to be predominantly defined within Eurocentric value systems of English language, Eurocentric curricula, and integrating into the labour market (Battiste, 2005; Inuit Tapariit Kanatami, 2011; Kapsalis, 2006). This vision of success presents a number of challenges for Indigenous students in achieving success within formal education, including low graduation rates among Indigenous learners and low levels of employment in the North. Within the context of the North, success within formal education cannot be examined without taking into account the role that colonization has had on Inuit, and the intergenerational effects on grandparents, parents and youth. Residential schools, forced relocations, and other colonial impositions all contributed to the ongoing process of Eurocentric notions of success superseding Inuit traditional perspectives. Despite the emerging discourse of what success means within Indigenous communities, much of the literature does not engage with the Northern Inuit experience. The research contained within this thesis seeks to carve out space for the voices of young Inuit to speak to how all these

educational, non-formal, and informal processes manifested in their lives, and more specifically how they currently perceive success for themselves on both personal and community levels.

The experiences defining success as a balance between Inuit and Qallunaatut epistemologies were largely shared amongst participants with important unique distinctions colouring each participant's account. Although each participant's perspectives shared in this research are highly specific, a number of clear threads were soon established across experiences. That said, by no means does this research claim to speak to the overarching experience of Inuit students. Instead, I hope that this research may contribute to ongoing discussion concerning Indigenous and Indigenizing education in Canada, and continue to elaborate on appropriate ways to achieve an empowering and appropriate cultural education.

Overall, my experience with this project was positive. I began this research with an observation and a question about why some of my closest friends in high school had very different experiences with formal schooling. As a Qallunaaq learner, functioning in a predominantly Qallunaat school system, my educational experience was much different than my Inuk peers. I held a number of levels of privilege associated with being a white, male, upper class individual living in Nunavut that allowed me to take a relatively straightforward path through formal education systems. The language of instruction was my first language, the pedagogy was in line with my cultural beliefs, and the school schedule reflected my family's economic activities. Resulting from an education system that privileged Qallunaatut notions of success, I excelled where many of my Inuk schoolmates encountered challenges. It was this discrepancy in educational experience that spurred me to explore this issue further.

It quickly became clear that there were a number of ways to explore this issue. To determine the most appropriate approach, I was required to draw on my life experience, my

understanding of educational and social dynamics in Nunavut, my relationships within my community and through consultation with my research supervisor. Through ongoing conversations that explored how power and privilege were evident at multiple levels, an exploration of the qualitative experience among former Inuit students concerning notions of success was deemed an appropriate focus and approach. Yet, it was not easy arriving at this question. Just as this research calls for a critical examination of how colonization has shaped education systems, over the course of this research I had to engage in a number of important critical reflections related to how colonization has shaped my own thinking.

One example of this can be found in how the focus of this research shifted over time. Initially, I wanted to focus my analysis solely on the relationship between participants' perspectives of success in high school. In conversing with my supervisor, however, I realized that high school was only one small part of a journey of lifelong learning (Battiste, 2005; CCL, 2007). In response to this realization, I decided to focus first on lifelong success, and then explore how the short period of high school related to success. This proved to be an important shift in that I was able to gain insight into a larger analysis of success in Nunavut, while still gaining an understanding of the role that high school plays in it.

In the face of challenges with presenting the complexities of the subject, I was ultimately able to effectively make meaning out of the data. This aspect of the process was significant to me on a personal level as I was continually impressed with how my relationship with the participants continued to add nuance to the discussion of how young Inuit are defining success in their lives. I was confirmed in my belief that this subject was an area worthy of academic investigation, and also called for further exploration. In attempting to make meaning, I was required to situate this data within the discourse of education in Nunavut, but also to Indigenous education on a national

scale.

As expressed by the participants, Inuit perspectives of success are a balance of both Qallunaat and Inuit values, and the importance of balancing these two worlds do not align with formal education processes. The perceived results of this disconnect was expressed as a desire by all the former students I interviewed to have the opportunity to play an active role in establishing their own terms of balance - in contrast to having the system define it for them. In order to play an active role, the dominant position of Qallunaatut success needed to be analyzed, understood, and dismantled. Fundamentally, all participants spoke to the desire for future generations of Inuit students to be afforded an education based on bicultural and bilingual values. Based on these perspectives, the relationship of power between success rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Qallunaatut was a central theme in the discussions that transpired over the course of this research project.

In reflecting on how this research fits into the larger discourse of education in Nunavut, I identified an Inuttitut word that best reflects the concepts of both empowering Inuit cultural notions of success while simultaneously naming, understanding, and dismantling the dominant position that a Eurocentric paradigm plays in it. This word is *Akunninganiinniq*. In the final chapter of this thesis, I briefly situate the ‘Akunninganiinniq Model of Success’ within the context of Nunavut as well as larger trends in contemporary research focusing on Indigenous success. Following this, I identify a number of necessary supports and recommendations that need to be achieved for the model to be appropriately implemented within formal education processes. Finally, I suggest a number of potential future directions of this research to continue to explore the area of Inuit success.

Akunninganiinniq Model: Inuit Success and Formal Education in Nunavut

As mentioned previously, the term Akunninganiinniq is derived from the concept of being ‘in between’. I chose this term after consulting with a number of Inuttit language speakers as it effectively encompassed the primary wish of participants: educational processes in Nunavut should allow learners to engage with Inuit cultural education processes while equipping them with the needed skills to excel in modern communities. In this way, there are a number of fundamental characteristics of the Akunninganiinniq Model, including an evolving form of culture based education, dedication to bilingual education, and the requirement to dismantle the influential position of Eurocentrism on educational processes in Nunavut.

The Akunninganiinniq Model seeks to contribute to the growing body of academic work that explores definitions of success amongst Indigenous learners (Bazylak, 2002; Bouvier, Battiste & Laughlin, 2016; Canada Council of Learning, 2007, 2009; Claypool, 2013; Moon, 2014). Among others, the work of the Canada Council of Learning has provided key theoretical insight with which to further explore how Indigenous success might be defined given that learning is more complex than dominant pedagogy found within formal schools. While the dominant trend within the discourse of success is deeply rooted in a Qallunaat paradigm, the CCL sets out how success might be understood within three distinct Indigenous cultures, Inuit, Metis, and First Nations. The CCL’s establishment of Indigenous success as holistic, life-long, and involving a number of distinct cultural aspects, is a significant departure from the dominant discourse.

Although the CCL’s focus on cultural notions of success is an important contribution to the discussion of redefining success, it did not fully account for the data gathered through this research. Despite clearly reflecting the importance of education rooted in Inuit culture, all

participants were quick to acknowledge the importance of achieving a *balance* between Inuit cultural and Qallunaat/Western success. With that said, participants were highly critical of the dominant position Qallunaat education held within formal schooling processes. It is within this context that I moved to develop the Akunninganiinniq Model with the hope that it not only effectively encompasses both worlds of success but also honours the intent of the participants. The Akunninganiinniq Model calls for a critical analysis of the dominant position of Qallunaatut paradigm within schools in order to provide an education that honours both Qallunaat and Inuit world views in a relationship of balance.

The Akunninganiinniq Model is also based on the need to establish a fully bilingual education system at all levels of schooling. Calls for appropriate bilingual education in Nunavut have been urged for many years (Berger, 2009; Martin, 2000; Inuit Tapariit Kanatami, 2011). The Akunninganiinniq Model echoes the call that the Nunavut Department of Education must dismantle the dominant position English language education holds in many formal schooling spaces while moving to empower the currently inferior position held by Inuttitut. In his report, *Conciliator's Final Report: The Nunavut Project*, Thomas Berger writes, "There will have to be major changes in the education system in order to vastly increase the number of Inuit high school graduates; in my view a new approach is required, a comprehensive program of bilingual education" (2006, p. IV). Here Berger's call for a bilingual system acknowledges the language issue that has deprived Inuit students from finding their success in schools. The Akunninganiinniq Model echoes Berger's call and holds bilingual education as a fundamental pillar of the model.

In addition to the establishment of bilingual education system, the Akunninganiinniq Model has strong roots in the concept of culture-based education. A number of authors have

elaborated on both the prospects and pitfalls of an education that prioritizes the culture of the learner as a basis for education (Aylward, 2009; Cajete, 1994). There are a number of different manifestations of culture-based education. In many respects the Akunninganiinniq model is a derivative of culture-based education as set out by Pueblo educator Gregory Cajete (1994). In his book, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, Cajete writes, “Every community must integrate the learning occurring through modern education with the cultural bases of knowledge and value orientations essential to perpetuate its way of life. A balanced integration must be created” (1994, p. 17). Akunninganiinniq Model prioritizes Inuit cultural learning, while also balancing the important role Western education pedagogy and curriculum plays in student lives. In short, Akunninganiinniq Model is rooted in the need to support an Inuit way of life in modern contexts.

Finally, an important aspect of the Akunninganiinniq Model that shapes its relationship to culture based education is its fundamental requirement to dismantle the dominant position Eurocentric paradigm holds in shaping formal education. In this way, Akunninganiinniq Model has a direct relationship with anti-racist education in that it acknowledges the limitations of simply working to revitalize Inuit educational processes. It is critical to analyze and dismantle the dominant position held by Eurocentrism in shaping educational processes in Nunavut, effectively positioning white culture and identity as superior (Battiste, 2013; St. Denis, 2007). In her article, *Uniting Aboriginal Education with Anti-Racist Education*, Cree Metis scholar Verna St. Denis (2007) speaks to limitations of culture-based education in stating:

If cultural authenticity is the problem then educators don’t have to look at what is the immensely more difficult task of challenging the conscious and unconscious ways in which the ideology of white identity as superior is normalized and naturalized in our schools and

nation, both in the past and in the present. (p. 1085)

In Nunavut some of the legislative processes to implement the Akunninganiinniq Model are already in place. Culture-based education is seen as a foundational philosophy of formal education in the Territory (Government of Nunavut, 2005). Despite the stated policy, a formal education system that appropriately honours Inuit educational values is not being realized in practice. The most significant impediment to the challenges is the Government of Nunavut's continued inability to dismantle the Western/Qallunaat roots on which the system is based. To achieve this, genuine cultural-based education will continue to be elusive. In this way Akunninganiinniq Model draws partially on philosophies that underpin both culture-based education and anti-racist education. Moreover, while it is important to acknowledge the ongoing challenges of implementing culture-based education in Nunavut, having political organizations recognize its importance at the very highest levels of government provides an important opportunity to move towards its realization. To achieve the Akunninganiinniq Model, a number of important steps must be taken.

Supports and Recommendations to Achieve Akunninganiinniq Model

To achieve Akunninganiinniq Model within formal education processes, I begin this section by reiterating the need for a critical rethinking of the educational philosophy that currently influences schooling in Nunavut, followed by more specific suggestions that apply to amending Nunavut school operations. As the CCL points out, formal schooling has played a critical role in shaping young peoples' perspectives of success and of themselves. When education is not achieved because of the socio-cultural political formations of colonial education, young people suffer from the consequences of not having achieved that Eurocentric marker of success. It then becomes important to explore the question of how to realign education systems

to respond to the cultural education needs of Inuit students. It is also important to stress that the responsibility for rethinking and restructuring formal schooling processes should fall upon the Department of Education and Government of Nunavut - and is not necessarily the responsibility of the community. This may seem to state the obvious, but a number of recently published documents place the responsibility for reform on parents, communities, and individual students (Inuit Tapriit Kanatami, 2011). Calls for a shift in educational philosophy have been taking place for a number of years (McGregor 2010; Vick-Westgate, 2002). Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, (previously TFN), and other groups at the community level have been lobbying for the government to implement education based on Inuit principles since the early 1960s (McGregor 2010; 2012). Accordingly, it is important to clearly identify that the responsibility for acting to pursue shifts rests with the Government of Nunavut, and more specifically the Nunavut Department of Education.

Throughout the data collection stage of this research, participants suggested a number of ways in which educational processes could align closer with their notions of success. Several of the following recommendations have been outlined loosely in the previous chapter. In the following section, I will synthesize and expand on these recommendations while identifying a series of necessary supports for the shift to Akunninganiinniq to take place.

Critical Analysis of the Eurocentric Paradigm

In order to move towards the Akunninganiinniq Model, it is necessary to critically examine the historical and ongoing role Eurocentrism plays in formal education in Nunavut. It would be insufficient to engage in a discussion about how to achieve appropriate cultural education within schools without first being critical of the Eurocentric paradigm within which formal schooling has been and is currently rooted. To properly implement any of the subsequent

suggestions outlined below, it is important to first call attention to the underlying paradigm that is contributing to the devaluation of Inuit paradigms within the education system. As mentioned above, anti-racist education can provide insights as to how to maintain this balance.

The consequences of the inferior positioning of Inuit peoples' language, knowledge, survival in the north on the land, and the relational aspects of families and communities are numerous. Participants spoke extensively about the inferior position of Inuit knowledge within formal education processes. They expressed the notion that success within Nunavut schools continues to largely be defined by Eurocentric values. In order to effectively change this reality, it is crucial to critically analyze and understand how Eurocentric values continue to dominantly shape education processes in Nunavut. Schools continue to function predominantly in English, teach an imported southern curriculum based on Qallunaat notions of teacher-student divide, to name only a few. Non-Inuit teachers and administrators predominantly staff the schools. The school calendar is based on the Christian calendar, and activities are built on conventional southern sports.

In this way, the only identifiable solution is to continue to critically analyze, understand, and dismantle the Eurocentric roots of the current education system in Nunavut. In doing so, the potential exists for the Government of Nunavut and the Department of Education to move to not only understand and dismantle the current system, but also realign it towards an education system that appropriately values Inuit knowledge and Inuttitut language.

Rethinking Inuit Success and Formal Curricula

A central theme that emerged during my conversations with participants concerned the relationship between Inuit success and formal schooling. To fully understand the significance of this theme, it is imperative to first critically analyze the devalued position of Inuit knowledge

within schooling processes in Nunavut. As this process continued, it becomes possible to radically rethink pedagogy in Nunavut. This point notwithstanding, this process should not at all be seen as ‘radical’. It is simply the re-establishment of age-old educational processes that existed before the colonial imposition of Qallunaatut schooling. To be clear, calls for the re-establishment of educational processes that facilitate bicultural and bilingual education experiences are in line with not only this research but also communities across Nunavut (Rogers, 2017). Despite this, proposed shifts in educational philosophy continue to be seen as without value and ‘radical’ from the perspective of the Government of Nunavut and Department of Education. This speaks to the guiding philosophy held by the Ministry. It is important that the Government of Nunavut and Department of Education be held accountable to Inuit students, families, and communities. Marie Battiste writes of the process of re-establishing the value held in traditional education process. Referring to the impact of colonial prejudice imposed over the colonial process, Battiste (2011) writes:

[A]s we unravel these prejudices, we can begin to see that our own traditions offer a store from which we can rebuild, heal, recover, and restore healthy relationships. We must acknowledge the colonial shadow through a thorough awareness of the socio historical reality that has created the current context (p. 24).

It is in understanding, expressing, and living these traditions - while critically understanding how they are shaped within the colonial context - that the spirit of Akunninganiinniq can be fully realized.

To many within the education system, these changes may be viewed as a radical departure from current norms. It is imperative that these proposed recommendations are not viewed as radical. Only through a process of normalizing these values as beneficial to all

Northern students can governments mobilize the necessary resources to implement appropriate change.

Increasing Number of Inuit Educators

In addition to providing decolonization training for non-Inuit educators, achieving the Akunninganiinniq Model also requires increases in the number of Inuit educators within formal school settings. The process to achieving this recommendation is two-fold. First, existing systemic barriers that disallow community members from becoming educators must be understood and dismantled. A growing body of literature identifies a number of barriers that inhibit community members from participating in educational processes within their communities (Berger, 2006; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011).

Second, appropriate support must be provided for Inuit community members who wish to pursue educator training. As illustrated throughout this thesis, experiences with formal schooling are markedly different for Inuit and non-Inuit students. Stemming from this, supports to achieve success must be catered towards student specific cultural needs. These supports may manifest in varied ways but could include increasing access to teacher training programs in small communities, more effective recruiting techniques, increased access to childcare, implementing appropriate financial support, and tutoring specific to student needs.

The Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP) delivered through the Nunavut Arctic College is one program developed to increase the number of Inuit educators in Nunavut. Despite the program's important mission, it continues to face serious challenges in producing enough teachers to pursue a fully bilingual education system. It is important to note that the Government of Nunavut recently ordered a complete review of the program citing the inability to produce

enough Inuit teachers (Varga, 2017). The significant role that NTEP plays within the push for a bilingual and bicultural education system cannot be understated. It is critical that this program is reviewed and appropriate amendments are implemented.

In contrast to the challenges of NTEP, a Master of Education in Leadership and Learning program has been successfully delivered to two cohorts of Inuit graduates. Nunavut Arctic College, University of Prince Edward Island, and St. Francis Xavier University delivered the program in partnership. The program prioritized teaching and learning in Inuktitut, decolonization theory, and was firmly rooted in the desire to contribute to the establishment of a bicultural and bilingual education system. Many of the participants continue to fill education leadership positions in Nunavut and continue to work passionately towards a system of education that more accurately reflects its student-body. It is unknown at this time whether the program will run again but serves as an example of Inuit post-secondary success.

Decolonization Training for Nunavut Teachers

One significant step towards achieving Akunninganiinniq Model of Success is restructuring teacher training in Nunavut. The important role teachers play in influencing notions of success among Inuit students was discussed by a number of participants. One way of achieving this is providing decolonization training for Nunavut Teachers. Currently the majority of school staff are Qallunaat who move from the south to pursue employment opportunities in Nunavut (Berger, 2006; Berger, 2009). The limitations of non-Inuit attempting to facilitate cultural based education are written about extensively (Aylward, 2009). Aylward speaks to the challenges non-Inuit teachers encounter when attempting to provide cultural education. She writes, “Educators reported the struggles they faced when trying to implement school programs

that they felt to be often ineffective even if appropriately respectful” (p. 30). In this way, despite their best intentions, teachers with little to no understanding of Inuit culture and language represent a daunting barrier to achieving the Akunninganiinniq Model.

To address this issue, I recommend anti-racist training for all Nunavut educators. Anti-racist training would provide educators with the tools to understand and challenge the dominant position Eurocentrism plays in shaping education in Nunavut and how it manifests in everyday school operations. This in turn would deepen educators understanding of the power relationship between Qallunaat and Inuit notions of success which privileges whiteness and Qallunaat epistemologies. It is important to note that the cultural education systems are already in place through age-old community networks. Anti-racist education training would facilitate the dismantling of the colonial barriers keeping these cultural processes out of school settings. Gaining this understanding is central to providing Qallunaat educators the practical tools to work to support cultural education while acknowledging the inherent limitations based on their Qallunaat identities. This is not a unique recommendation for this study and has been identified as necessary in a number of other publications (Aylward, 2010; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011; St. Denis, 2007; McKechnie, 2015). Further suggestions to increase the capacity for non-Inuit educators to engage with the Akunninganiinniq Model include language lessons; teacher training on the land and land based education, and significantly increased access to cultural education activities (hunting, sewing, interviewing elders).

Recommendations for Further Research

Drawing on the recommendations stated above, there are a number of threads of potential future research that would contribute to the evolving discourse of Indigenous success. Basing the

research within the personal stories and lived experience of the participants situates this research as highly unique and not a complete portrait of Inuit students' relationship to the education system. That said, a number of important insights were achieved that lead to further potential research questions.

One area of critical importance for future research is a more in depth exploration of Inuit perspectives of success, both traditional and modern. As this research argues for an education system that is more aligned with Inuit cultural values, it is important to continually explore how these values can continue to provide a basis for education in Nunavut. Although it is important to note that these traditional processes continue to play a vibrant role in the lives of many Inuit, the dominant systems requirement to have policy informed by formal academic research and publications necessitates an expansion of the available literature on Inuit success.

The impact of this research should not be understated. Leading Inuit intellectual Siila Watt Cloutier (2014) writes of the important life skills gained through active participation in hunting culture. In an interview with the Globe and Mail Watt Cloutier (2014) states:

The land, ice and snow is a training ground for developing your sense of self and your character. You're being taught patience. You're being taught how to be courageous and bold at the right time. You're being taught how to not be impulsive, because impulsivity can put you and your loved ones at risk. You're learning how to withstand stressful situations and to have sound judgment and wisdom. You're not only learning how the world works, but you're learning about how you work. In institutionalized schooling, those things are very separate, but in a hunting culture, they're holistic. (Watt-Cloutier, 2014)

Building on analyses like Watt-Cloutier and continuing to evolve our understanding of the links between cultural practices, passing on of values, and Inuit success is a critical next step. In

addition to Inuit success, it would be helpful to understand the relationship that Nunavut teachers have to these forms of cultural success. Researching the current discourse of how teachers position themselves to these types of success - and appropriate ways in which they think they can be supported - would also be an important area of further study.

A further omission from this research was the lack of discussion about how the Akunninganiinniq Model relates to the CCL realms of Spirituality and Ceremony. Spirituality and Ceremony are identified as realms of knowledge in the revised Inuit Holistic Learning Model. It is important to acknowledge that this research fell short of discussing how these realms fit into participants' perspectives of success. This is a significant omission that warrants further exploration.

Afterward

In conclusion, this thesis project was carried out within the context of real lives unfolding. The participants and I encountered a number of personal challenges on the path of completing the thesis. I began my Masters with no children and now I have two beautiful daughters. My children have undoubtedly influenced my path to completing this thesis and continue to fuel my dedication to ensuring they have every opportunity to engage with their ancestral culture within formal educational processes. Further, the goal of producing research about the North, by Northerners, was another cornerstone of my inspiration. I am hopeful that this thesis contributes to the ongoing conversation surrounding Inuit success in Nunavut both within and outside of formal education processes. Additionally, I hope that this research adds more weight to the voices of students in reflecting and analyzing their own educational experience. This project falls in line with the Canada Council of Learning's identification that

learning is lifelong, as it is one stop on a longer journey.

While acknowledging my inability to reflect adequately on the complex nature of Inuit success, I hope that this study can make a positive contribution to the discourse of educational change in the North to improve the successes of Inuit youth. Ultimately this research process has made a significant contribution to my understanding of the complicated relationship between cultural paradigms and educational success. Furthermore, although school has significantly influenced how participants balance the need to obtain skills and knowledge throughout their lives, it did not end with their exit from school. Success was and continues to be an ongoing balancing act that is constantly evolving according to changing social, economic, and community dynamics. Only through critically understanding these evolving definitions of success can an education system be created to support and facilitate the empowerment of Inuit students within formal education in Nunavut.

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Appendix A

Consent Form



Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Piqqusilirigirniq: A Narrative Inquiry of Inuit Perspectives of Success and the Role of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit or Traditional Knowledge

Researcher(s): Andrew Morrison, Masters Candidate with the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 867-222-5677, andrewiqaluit@gmail.com,

Supervisor: Dr. Marie Battiste, Educational Foundations, 306-966-7576, marie.battiste@usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

The following study seeks to explore the role Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or Inuit cultural knowledge, plays in notions of success among up to 5 former Inuit high school students. Utilizing narrative inquiry methodology, the research will explore how notions of success are currently defined from the perspectives of Inuit former high school students in Nunavut. This research will further analyze definitions of success as espoused by Euro-Canadian epistemologies in Nunavut, how success rooted in Inuit epistemologies continues to play a role in the lives of Inuit, and finally how Inuit students negotiate these divergent and often incongruent notions of success. The research will aim to center the voices and experiences of Inuit students with the objective of illuminating the perspectives of those who are most deeply impacted by dominating definitions of success – the students themselves. Ultimately the goal of this study is to contribute to the understanding of how experiences of colonization have, and continue, to shape our lives.

Procedures:

- The research process will consist of up to 3 one-hour interviews and the option of participating in a final focus group.
- Interviews and the focus group will be open-ended and focused on your experiences defining what it means to be successful in your life.
- Interviews will take place at a time and place agreed upon between yourself and the researcher.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded with a hand-held recording device then transferred to a password locked computer for transcription and analysis.
- You will be asked to participate in up to 3 one-hour interview sessions then a final 2-hour focus group. The total time commitment will be approximately 5 hours.

- Once the data gathering stage is complete you will be provided with a transcript of the recorded material. You will then be asked to review the transcripts and revise/clarify any points you feel necessary.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Potential Risks:

- Risk involved in this research will be minimal. Participants will be made aware of their rights at the onset of the research process and informed that they will be allowed to discontinue at any time. To mitigate these risks, the researcher will bring up all potential risks at the initial research debrief with each participant. At this point the participants will be given time to consider risks and reflect on their participation with the project.
- If at any point, participants wish to withdraw from the research they will be made aware of their right to do so at anytime

Confidentiality:

- Throughout all stages of research confidentiality will be strictly maintained.
- Only the primary researcher and two thesis supervisors, Dr. Marie Battiste, and Dr. Geraldine Balzer, will have access to primary transcripts after you have edited and agreed they represent your intentions.
- Participants will be made aware of who will have access to transcripts by providing this information on their consent forms.
- Due to the potential for lengthy transcribing, there may be a possibility that an outside translator/transcriber may be needed. In this case the researcher will have the translator/transcriber sign a form agreeing to uphold confidentiality throughout their participation in the project. The possibility of an outside translator/transcriber having access to transcripts will be made known to participants before the commencement of research.
- Throughout the data collection stage, participant identities will be kept confidential, although the participants will be advised that confidentiality to each other will not be possible with the focus group being a place where they will talk to one another. They will be asked to keep confidential their conversation but made aware that this may not entirely ensure their confidentiality to others.
- **Storage of Data:**
 - All Data will be stored in a locked cabinet or a password locked computer in the house of the primary researcher
 - When the data no longer required, the data will be destroyed in an appropriate manner

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

-
- Should you wish to withdraw, due to feeling uncomfortable about the content of the research, or relationship to the researcher all data that you provided will be destroyed and not used in the final thesis.
 - Please review the consent form, and the right to withdraw statement and sign and date to indicate your understanding that you have the right to withdraw data from the study at any time up to one month following the approval of the transcript. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:

- Follow up with the participants will take place in 3 stages. After the interviews and focus group sessions, transcripts will be provided to the participants for their approval. Along with this, before the thesis is published participants will have another opportunity to review the draft of the thesis or the analysis of their contributions and may discuss and suggest changes. Additionally, upon completion of the research project participants will be gifted with a final copy of the thesis.

Questions or Concerns:

- If there is any other questions, please feel free to bring them up now, or any time later with me Andrew Morrison at this phone number 8-222-5677 and/or address andrewiqaluit@gmail.com
- This research project has been submitted for review on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free 1 (888) 966-2975.

Consent

- Initial consent will be expressed through a written statement signed below

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

- Consent will be maintained through oral confirmation. Participants will continually affirm their consent through a tape recorder prior to the beginning of each session.

-
- To maintain consent the researcher will read and explain this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent. The participant will orally confirm that they have knowledge of its contents and appear to understand it."

Name of Participant

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix B



Email Invitation

Dear Prospective Participant,

I hope this email finds you well! I am emailing you today to invite you to participate in a research project I am doing as part of my Masters degree program at the University of Saskatchewan.

First a bit about the project...

The project involves speaking with Inuit youth about how they view success in their lives and how Inuit culture and language relate to these ideas. To do so I will set up interviews with up to 5 participants for 3 approximately one-hour long conversations over the course of one month. After the one on one interview session I will invite all participants to come together to share their experiences in a focus group setting for a maximum of 2 hours.

These conversations, both individual and group, will be recorded and transcribed. You will be provided with a copy of the transcripts of your contribution for your review to edit, clarify, or change before you approve them. Your stories and your perceptions will help shape a final thesis document as part of my masters degree and the data may also be used in presentations and other articles. All participation would be confidential and your identity would be protected with an alias or made up name that you may pick, or if you are comfortable, I will.

It is important for you to know that if you do choose to take part in the project, you will be given a consent form that outlines research protocols that have been approved by the Nunavut Research Council and the University of Saskatchewan for which you will be asked to acknowledge your understanding of them. Among them, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequence. If this does occur, all of our conversations will NOT be used in the project and destroyed in an appropriate manner. Please feel free to get in touch with me to discuss any questions or concerns you might have about the research or its process. I have also attached a more formal description of the project below.

I am looking forward to an interesting project looking at how to improve education experiences for Inuit students!

Qujannamiik,

Andrew Morrison

867-222-5677

andrewiqaluit@gmail.com

Here is a more formal description of the project:

The following study explores how former Inuit high school students conceptualize success by considering the role of the formal education system and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or Inuit cultural knowledge, in shaping this understanding. Using narrative inquiry methodology, the research will explore how notions of success are

defined from the perspectives of up to 5 former Inuit high school students in Nunavut analyzes definitions of success as espoused by Euro-Canadian epistemologies, and explores how a different understanding of success rooted in Inuit epistemologies continues to play a role in the lives of Inuit. By centering the voices and experience of Inuit students, this study provides a grounded understanding of the ways that Inuit youth negotiate tensions surrounding their education. Its primary objective, then, is to illuminate the perspectives of those who are most deeply impacted by dominant definitions of success – the Inuit people themselves.

Appendix C



Interview Script/Focus Group Guide

This research will take place in two phases, the first phase will be a series of open-ended one-hour long interviews, and the second will be a focus group with all participants being invited to attend.

For all sessions the researcher will adhere to Inuit research protocols and provide traditional country food to share with participants.

Interview Script

Thanks for agreeing to meet up today! We need to begin with full understanding of the research, the process and the protocols required by Nunavut Research Institute and the University of Saskatchewan.

Review schedule for the meeting

Research Protocols – remind participants that they can withdraw at any time and that all data associated with them will be destroyed.

Consent form – after oral consent is gained, the researcher will go through the consent form and have participant either sign or consent orally.

Breaks – Participants will be reminded that breaks can be taken at any time throughout the sessions. The researcher will be aware of body language and tone of conversation in terms of judging when a break is necessary

Focused Discussion

The tone of this interview will be informal and more along the lines of a conversation. This is to make sure you feel comfortable bringing the conversation where you want it to go.

- 1) That said, lets start off by talking about what it means to be successful to you...How do you define success in your life?

NOTE: The interview will be structured in a way to allow the participant to determine the subject of conversation. That said, a list of potential prompt questions is provided

- 2) What role does Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit or Inuit cultural knowledge and Inuit language factor into this success?
- 3) What processes help you achieve these notions of success?
- 4) What role does/should the school play in helping Inuit students achieve these notions of success?
- 5) Can you share a story of when different definitions of success came into conflict?
- 6) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Conclusion: Thanks very much for meeting with me today; I will get a transcript of our conversation for your review and approval within the next two weeks.

Focus Group Guide

All participants will be invited to take part in a final focus group to share their experiences of defining success. The questions will be similar to those listed above with a more in-depth introduction and debrief

Important Notes for Focus Group

Participants will be reminded that all conversations should stay within the group. Participants will be told of the plan for the conversation, introduced to the subject matter, and

The primary researcher will facilitate the conversations which will begin with each participant introducing themselves in the circle.

The researcher will then introduce the main research question above and ask participants to respond.

At all times throughout the focus group participants will be free to speak or stay silent.

The researcher will then leave the circle open for participants to pursue subjects and discussions as they chose. If appropriate, the researcher will introduce more of the prompting questions outlined above.

After a maximum of 2 hours of the facilitator will wrap up with each participant having a chance to address any outstanding issues.

The participants will be thanked and provided with a gift of traditional country food.

Appendix D



Research Ethics Boards (Behavioural and Biomedical)
TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Title: **Decolonizing Success: A Narrative Inquiry of Inuit Perspectives of Success and the Role of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit or Traditional Knowledge**

I, **(name)** _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as **desired**. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with **Andrew Morrison**. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to **Andrew Morrison** to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of researcher